

were sent to fill. It seems to me that the great desire on the part of employment brokers has been in many cases to secure the fee, irrespective of whether the situation would suit the particular client or not. Provision is made in the Bill for regulating the scale of fees to be charged; and in this respect numerous cases have occurred in which heavy fees have been extorted from servants who were sent sometimes long distances to positions for which they were unsuited. None of the provisions of the Bill will in any way inflict hardship or injustice on those labour agencies in the State which are well conducted. It has been often stated, when servants were being sent to vacant positions, that if the situations proved unsuitable, the employment broker would find them others. No doubt in the case of the legitimate broker that promise is kept fairly well; but it does not always follow. In many cases the fees are collected and servants sent away, and in a week or a fortnight those servants being found unsuitable or the work not fitted for them, they are either dismissed or have to leave because they cannot do the work. This Bill seeks in some degree to protect these persons from the operations of unscrupulous brokers—if I may so call them—who would do this kind of thing. Some legislation in this direction is required, and the Bill has been introduced and passed in another place with the view to meeting these wants which have been brought under notice from time to time. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. G. RANDELL, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 5:23 o'clock, until 7:30 on the next evening (the Exhibition of Manufactures to be opened on the Wednesday afternoon).

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 4th December, 1906.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR MINES: Papers in connection with Gold-mining Lease No. 1473 (Legacy West).

QUESTION—CIRCUIT COURT, GERALDTON.

MR. T. L. BROWN asked the Attorney General: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to establish Circuit Courts in the Geraldton District? 2, If so, when? 3, In view of about 40 witnesses in the Sibley and Wren case, from Cue, having to be brought from Cue to Perth, could the hearing not take place in Geraldton, thereby saving considerably the expense to the Crown?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1 and 2, Whenever the requirements of public convenience and economy in administration of the law require it, cases whether civil or criminal requiring to be tried before a Supreme Court Judge will be tried at Geraldton or other suitable place. 3, The case of *Rex v. Wren* will be tried in Perth, this being the more economic course to pursue having regard to the special issues likely to arise in the case. The case of *Rex v. Sibley* will be tried at Geraldton.

REPORT—SWEATING INQUIRY.

MR. TROY brought up the report of the select committee on sweating in the State.

Report received, read, and ordered to be printed.

MR. TROY farther moved—

That the minutes of evidence taken by the committee do lie upon the table of the House, but be reserved for the perusal of members only, and that the Clerk be instructed to prevent any person from making extracts from or copies of the same for publication.

MR. T. H. BATH doubted whether when a report was laid on the table of the House it was competent to restrict the publication of extracts from the evidence. The general understanding had been that when a report was laid on the table it was open not only to members but to the general public, and he would like to have that point made clear.

THE PREMIER: A definite ruling was desirable as to whether a report when laid on the table became public property. Recently when the analysis of various whiskies in the State was made and a report was laid on the table, it became public property by extracts being published in the Press, and that nearly led to an action at law.

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 225 said:—

All papers and documents laid upon the table of the House shall be considered public. Papers not ordered to be printed may be inspected at the office of the House at any time by members, and, unless otherwise ordered by the Speaker, by other persons, and copies thereof or extracts therefrom may be made.

Standing Order 356 read thus:—

The report of a committee shall be brought up by the chairman, or by some other member of and appointed by the committee for the purpose, and may be ordered to lie upon the table or otherwise dealt with, as the House may direct.

He now ruled that it was permissible for the hon. member to move the present motion, unless the House otherwise directed.

THE PREMIER took it that it was not proposed to print the evidence.

MR. SPEAKER: That was so, for reasons stated; and under the Standing Orders the hon. member was entitled to move the motion he had done.

THE PREMIER: If the evidence was not printed, it could not be laid on the table.

MR. BATH: It could be laid on the table.

THE TREASURER: The first Standing Order now quoted stated that papers

laid on the table of the House should be public. Was that not so?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

THE TREASURER: If printed only?

MR. SPEAKER: It was clear from the words "as the House may direct," that if the House approved of the procedure proposed by the hon. member, the Standing Order was sufficiently complied with. Papers not ordered to be printed might be inspected "unless otherwise ordered by the Speaker." The matter was therefore under the Speaker's control, and he would not allow the evidence to become public property.

Question put and passed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by MR. HOLMAN, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor), on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Introduced by the TREASURER, and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

THE TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson): I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): The startling statements contained in the revenue returns for November lead me to ask the Treasurer whether, in the interests of the State, he does not deem it advisable to reconsider the votes of money both from consolidated revenue and from loan for the current year 1906-7. As members who have read that statement are aware, there is now a deficit of over £200,000, with every probability that even if the present rate at which the deficit is increasing be not maintained, the Treasurer will not be able to make ends meet before the end of the present financial year. Comparing the proposed expenditure for 1906-7 with that for 1903-4, and even allowing for the expenditure of £1,332,000 from loan, the State is not likely to secure any advantage this year as compared with the year mentioned, having in view the money available from consolidated revenue and from

loan. The amounts spent on Public Works and on Mines in 1903-4 totalled over £700,000, while this year the total of the combined votes is considerably less, to the amount of over £300,000; and seeing there was £700,000 of loan expenditure in 1903-4, we shall find that in spite of the boasted vigorous public works policy, paid for out of loan, there will not be more labour employed for this year than was employed in 1903-4. Probably there will be a little more labour employed this year than was employed in 1905-6; but if we recollect that a great portion of the money will be absorbed in the purchase of rails which will have to be imported, and will not provide employment for our own people, I think there is need for reconsideration of the votes passed, especially of expenditure which was attacked by members in Opposition and criticised by the member for West Perth (Mr. Illingworth), in respect of those works which will not directly produce revenue, and which will involve a large increase of interest and sinking fund. As to the future prospects of the finances, the Treasurer may have some information which leads him to believe he can with safety undertake this nonproductive expenditure; but in view of the manner in which the finances are drifting, in view of the enormous deficit we are piling up, which I hold there is no hope of reducing before the end of the financial year, I am satisfied we are only courting difficulty and disaster for the State if the Treasurer persists in expending all the moneys included in the Loan Estimates. On last Friday evening we had not the returns for the month of November; and in view of the position in which we now find ourselves, it will be interesting to have some information from the Treasurer as to how he hopes to finance this State during the year 1906-7, and during the year which will immediately follow.

THE TREASURER (in reply): I cannot at a moment's notice go into details in regard to the financial position, but I can say with regard to the deficit with which we are now burdened, that there are some items of expenditure which have had to be made this last month or two which will not be so heavy in the succeeding months, and I hope it

will ease the pressure to some extent. There is one item to which my attention has been drawn. As members are aware, the subsidy to municipal councils has been decreased considerably from the 1st November. It naturally follows that during the month prior to November the municipal councils have doubtless collected all the money they possibly could in order to get the full subsidy that obtained to the end of their financial year; so that during November we paid out some abnormal sums in the way of subsidy to municipalities. Of course I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that our finances must necessarily cause some anxiety, and they are causing me some anxiety now, notably the falling off in our railway earnings. I cannot disguise from myself that as our railways during the past month have earned £22,000 short of what they earned during the corresponding month of last year, it is an indication that the trade of the country to some extent is falling off; and as railway earnings are a barometer of the trading community, one cannot close one's eyes to the fact that trade has decreased and our railway earnings are short by a very large sum in one month. I would point out that the way to meet a difficulty of that sort is not to be craven-hearted, not to say we are going to reconsider our position, reconsider our Estimates, stop the work of the country, and bring affairs to a standstill; but what we should do is to go forth boldly, while exercising due caution and cutting down expenditure where it is necessary. If the railway revenue is falling off by £22,000 in one month, and if that is going to be a criterion of the succeeding months of this financial year, the Commissioner of Railways must reduce his expenditure accordingly. We cannot go on employing numbers of people if the trade does not warrant that employment, and the expenditure must of course be made commensurate with the earnings of the institution. It is a commercial institution to that extent, and must be worked accordingly. The Treasurer cannot control that sort of thing, but he can issue instructions to the departments, or rather request his colleagues to see that economy is practised. To delay these Estimates would only accentuate the position. For the

Premier and my colleagues, I can say that if the earnings do not come in according to our anticipations, we are going to cut down our expenditure; but we are not going to do it in a rush or a hurry, because that would cast undue hardship upon those who are dependent on the departments for their living. We have first of all to be satisfied that the earnings are not there in consequence of diminished trade before we exercise the economies referred to by me.

MR. JOHNSON: Why did you not tell that to the people at the last general election?

THE TREASURER: I have preached that for years past, that we must cut according to our cloth. I have said time after time in the present Parliament that I hoped the Treasury would be a controlling office instead of a recording office. To the present it is simply a recording office. The Treasurer never knows till the end of a month how he stands, how the money is going, and then it is too late to cut down expenditure and economise for that month.

MR. BATH: I saw them using red tape in the court this morning to tie fowls' legs.

THE TREASURER: That seems extravagant. I hope the Attorney General will look into the matter. Tying fowls' legs could be done just as well with string. I regret that the Leader of the Opposition should have drawn comparisons in regard to the labour employed. Shall we be increasing the labour employed by stopping the expenditure of loan money in this country? It is all the more urgent to put through our programme and try to get the country started on a course of progress.

MR. BATH: I was talking only of unproductive works.

THE TREASURER: I am surprised that the hon. member should suggest such a thing as the delaying of the passing of the Estimates, thus throwing the whole country into a state of chaos and disorder. I hope we will pass this Bill, and that we will get on with the work of this House and try to come to completion in a few days. We do not want to have night sittings with the temperature as it has been during the last day or two, and I am sure my friends opposite do not want it. Therefore I ask the House

to put the measure through. We have threshed out all the details. Let the Bill go to the Upper House, and while they are considering it and the Estimates, let us consider the Bills to be introduced by the Premier and the Minister for Works in connection with the proposed railways.

Question put.

MR. FOULKES rose to speak.

MR. SPEAKER: The Treasurer has already replied.

MR. FOULKES: I took it that the hon. member was only replying to the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The member for Claremont is an old member of this House, and knows the practice.

MR. FOULKES: I will ask to be excused on this occasion, in order to say a few words. I am certain that many members of this House do not appreciate the readiness on the part of some Ministers to get up and reply.

THE TREASURER: You know that the other night I said it was not my reply, when I had spoken on the Colonial Secretary's Estimates and you desired to speak after me.

MR. FOULKES: I am not asking a concession this time. The Treasurer is one of the last from whom I would accept a concession. I do not think it is advisable for a Minister to get up and reply so soon, because it prevents members speaking.

THE TREASURER: I waited and looked round the Chamber to see if any member desired to speak, and as I did not see a move I rose. The hon. member is quite wrong in charging Ministers with want of courtesy. I am the last man in the House to show discourtesy in any form.

MR. HOLMAN: You are quite right this time.

MR. FOULKES: I do not know whether the Treasurer wants to prevent my speaking. The Leader of the Government, at least he whom we look upon as the Leader of the Government, has no desire to do so. I would like to remind the Treasurer that he is not the Leader of the Government.

MR. HOLMAN: Is the member for Claremont in order in speaking after the debate has closed?

MR. SPEAKER: The member for Claremont is not in order in making any personal reflections.

MR. FOULKES: I will go on with my remarks, if you will permit me.

MR. SPEAKER: It is against the practice and custom always followed in this House to speak after the mover has replied; but the hon. member said he wanted to make a few remarks, and I allowed him to proceed. If the House objects, I cannot do so.

MR. HEITMANN: Will every member of the House have an opportunity of following the hon. member?

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly, if I allow one member I shall have to allow every member. I cannot make an exception. I hope the member will not proceed.

MR. BATH: I believe it is contrary to the practice of the House to allow the hon. member to speak, and to prevent the hon. member and others infringing what is the rule I move—

That the member for Claremont be now heard.

THE PREMIER: If the member wishes to make any remarks, he will have an opportunity of doing so in Committee. It was apparent to every member of the House that the Treasurer did hesitate some time before replying, and gave the hon. member an opportunity of speaking then.

MR. SPEAKER: I must put the motion that has been moved. I was giving attention to the Treasurer, and he did wait some moments before replying. The motion is that the member be now heard.

Motion passed, leave given.

MR. FOULKES (Claremont): What I am anxious to point out is that I agree very much with what the Treasurer has said with regard to the proceeds of our railways, that they are indicative of the general trade and prosperity of the country. But what I want to urge upon the Government to-day is to see if some steps cannot be taken with regard to inducing the Railway Department to encourage the trade we have in this country. I cannot help thinking a great deal could be done to encourage the passenger traffic. I wish to give an example of what I mean, and why I consider the gene-

ral passenger trade of the country should be encouraged. A short time ago I was considering whether I should go to York in order to attend a sale of stock that was to take place there at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. In order to get to York at 2 o'clock in the afternoon it was necessary for me to leave Fremantle at half-past five in the morning, and York is only 90 miles from Fremantle, yet it would have been necessary for me to leave Fremantle at half-past five o'clock to get to York at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. If a person wishes to attend a sale of stock, or attend to any business at York in the afternoon, he cannot get back to Perth until half-past 10 or 11 o'clock at night. That to me is indictive that the Railway Department could take more trouble and more active steps to see if they cannot encourage the trade they have in this country. We hear continually complaints that the freights are heavy to some of these places, and people complain bitterly about the rates, and the result will be that there will be a tendency to diminish the railway receipts. The higher the rates the less the traffic carried over our railways. That is all I wish to bring under the notice of the House. It is a matter of serious importance that we should make our railways pay. The Railway Department is in a position to do a great deal of harm to our finances. I am well assured of this, that the Commissioner of Railways does do his level best to run our railways well, but he has such a heavy burden on his shoulders that it is impossible to attend to the arrangements of the traffic department. I suggest that the Minister for Railways should consult with the Commissioner to see if the traffic department could be made more energetic, and pay more attention to railway management.

Question (second reading) put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair—the **TREASURER** in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Collection of Monies:

MR. BATH: The Treasurer had absolutely failed to appreciate or answer the point made on the second reading. While he (Mr. Bath) did not object to loan ex-

penditure that was likely to bring in increased revenue and help to pay the interest bill, while we had unproductive works that involved interest being taken from the general revenue, it only required a year or two before the Treasurer and the State would be brought against the greatest difficulty, because after all we could not go on borrowing. If we built up an increased interest bill and spent money on unproductive works it would not pay. It was on that score he asked for an explanation from the Treasurer whether he did not think he was placing the State in a difficulty, practically allowing it to drift on towards bankruptcy by building these unproductive works from loan funds. On going up the railway towards Northam yesterday, one could see where money was expended which, by proper care, could be avoided in the present condition of the finances. It would not mean that the men engaged on the work would be out of employment, because the Treasurer could find employment for them on the railways to be constructed out of loan funds. Along that line members could see the old track where the railway once was; that was built out of loan moneys. Then there was the existing line, it was also built out of loan funds, and there was a new deviation which would be shortly in use, and then the existing line, now in use, would become useless as the old grade was. This was building up the capitalistic cost of the railways and involving an increase in the interest and sinking fund without corresponding increase in the earning power. It might reduce the expenses to a certain degree, but not to the extent that we had embarked money on. He would rather see the State set apart each year a certain sum of money towards building up a fund out of which such work might be done. We could afford to wait for some years for the work here referred to, especially in view of the financial position.

MR. GULL agreed entirely with the Leader of the Opposition, especially in regard to the Chidlow's Well deviation, which was one of the worst possible advertisements the railway management of this country could have. Nine out of ten passengers asked the same question, "Why all these side lines?" Finding a grade wrong, the Railway Department

would of course, in the first instance, be justified in rectifying it; but surely rectification was not necessary every other year. The small saving effected by removing the line 200 or 300 yards in the same class of country was certainly not commensurate with the expenditure. The Chidlow's Well deviation was one of the most extraordinary things ever perpetrated by the Railway Department. Next as to the question of water supply, while the deficit was being piled up at the rate of £40,000 a month, the Government were losing from £80,000 to £85,000 a year on the Coolgardie Water Scheme, and the water was lying idle in the dam breeding fish. It was all very well to say that a big water scheme would be required for Perth —

MR. JOHNSON: A big scheme was necessary to-day.

MR. GULL: Perhaps; but until the Mundaring supply was exhausted, to proceed with another scheme would be wrong. He hoped the Minister for Works would be able to convince Parliament that the Canning scheme was justified. It seemed an utter farce, while losing £80,000 a year on the Coolgardie Water Scheme and starving Perth for water, to refrain from taking advantage of the opportunity to convert that loss of £80,000 into a profit of £20,000 or £30,000 by supplying Perth from Mundaring. The Labour Government rose to the occasion, and put in a pipe, but not a big enough pipe. Such was the jealousy of using the Mundaring water for any other purpose than that for which it was originally intended, that a small pipe was laid to Guildford and a larger one to Midland Junction. Now it was necessary to tear up the small pipe in Guildford, and put in a bigger one, so that West Guildford also might be supplied.

MR. JOHNSON: Discussion on the Appropriation Bill was usually productive of little good, since the measure simply confirmed work already done; but the present Bill confirmed the attitude taken by the Opposition at the last general election. The Labour party had maintained that, no matter what Government might be in power, the deficit would grow unless the State obtained increased revenue by increased taxation. He was glad to see that the member for

Swan (Mr. Gull) at last realised that the policy of the party which he had opposed at the last general election was the right one and the safe one. Farther, it was matter for congratulation that the Government also appeared to be realising this. He could not agree with the remarks of the member for Swan on the straightening and regrading of the railway between Perth and Chidlow's Well.

MR. GULL: Between Chidlow's Well and Northam.

MR. JOHNSON: If straightening and regrading were necessary on the section between Perth and Chidlow's Well, it was also right to straighten and regrade the section to that important distributing centre, Northam.

MR. GULL: But it should not be necessary to build three lines in order to get one suitable.

MR. JOHNSON was not aware that three lines had been built.

MR. GULL: The hon. member should go and see for himself.

MR. JOHNSON commended the Railway Department for the work done between Midland Junction and Chidlow's Well. It would make a big difference in the expense of working that section. He disagreed also with criticisms levelled at the Government by the member for Swan on the ground that Mundaring water was not used for Perth. That question had been inquired into by the Labour Government, who had come to the conclusion that the scheme was impracticable. The utmost supply that one could possibly expect on the basis of the records of rainfall at Mundaring extending over the last 15 or 16 years, under the most favourable circumstances, was seven million gallons per day. Not less than three million gallons per day would be required for the goldfields and for places east of Mundaring; that left for Perth four million gallons, which was useless. Had that quantity of water been brought to Perth, there would have been the same cry as was now raised for a comprehensive scheme. No Government should embark on a scheme which would not supply ten million gallons per day to Perth and the metropolitan area. The extension of the Mundaring supply to Guildford and Midland Junction was justified because the expense was compensated by the supply. No engineer

could possibly come to any other conclusion than that to bring Mundaring water to Perth, in view of the limited supply available, would be a wild scheme.

THE CHAIRMAN: This was hardly within the range of the clause.

MR. JOHNSON merely wished to reply to the remarks of the member for Swan. He was sorry to say he feared that during the present summer the supply for Perth would be insufficient, and he recommended that a stock of 18-inch pipes be held, so that if necessary Mundaring water could be supplied to Maylands. He totally disagreed, however, with the Treasurer's action in enlarging and extending mains for Perth water supply until there was water to put through those mains.

THE TREASURER: What? Let the people go without water?

MR. JOHNSON: In a wild moment, the Treasurer had put the cart before the horse, and was spending money which carried interest and sinking fund, on mains before there was water to put through them.

THE TREASURER: No.

MR. JOHNSON: The execution of the Canning water scheme would take five years.

THE TREASURER: Let the hon. member state a main that was without water.

MR. JOHNSON: The enlarged mains right through Subiaco.

THE TREASURER: Those all had water.

MR. JOHNSON: No. In Mueller Road a one-inch main, of which the people had complained as not supplying sufficient water, had been taken up and a three-inch main substituted, but that three-inch main contained no more water, and the residents of Mueller Road would be called on to limit their consumption during the summer. The same thing would apply in many districts. At Maylands the hon. gentleman had put down mains, but had no water to put through them. The people of Maylands, in fact, complained that they did not want this water supply, having wells which would have filled their requirements for a year or two yet. It would be absolutely necessary before the summer went through. The member for Swan also referred —

THE CHAIRMAN could not allow the hon. member to proceed. The whole of the discussion was out of order. He simply allowed it because the second reading had been hurried. No explanation would be in order now.

MR. JOHNSTON had no desire to disagree with the Chairman. He was sorry one member had been allowed to bring this forward and discuss it. He totally disagreed with the remarks of that hon. member, and desired to record his disagreement. However, he had no more to say on the question if it was out of order.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : In regard to the duplication which appeared on the Estimates, he only wished to reiterate the statement made the other night in connection with the Loan Estimates. He wished to point out that this duplication would only extend as far as Spencer's Brook. In 1905 the authorisation for this work was £22,658, of which £20,788 was expended. Since then there had been a farther authorisation of £19,618 for duplication from Woolooloo to Baker's Hill, of which £1,435 had been spent up to the 30th June. Probably most of the £19,000 authorised at that time had been expended. He took no responsibility for the authorisation of this work, but it would be suicidal to stop the work until it was completed to Spencer's Brook. He had already pointed out that a big reduction of expenditure in connection with working the railways would ensue from carrying out this work, and there would be greater safety to the travelling public. On going to the expense of such a work as the duplication of the line, earnest consideration should be given to the necessity of regrading and straightening the line as far as possible. He did not think that in any single instance a line had been duplicated and then pulled down and the work started over again.

MR. BATH : Members were only talking of the way the old lines used to go.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : Spencer's Brook was as far as the duplication was going. He gave an assurance to the House the other night that as far as he was concerned and the Government were concerned they thought that, unless there was special parliamentary authority,

there should be no farther duplication of this line. Members would have an opportunity when any farther Loan Estimates were brought before the House to see that money was not provided for extension beyond that point, unless they so desired. He simply wished to make these observations on account of the remarks by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. HOLMAN : It would be useless to dwell very long on this measure, seeing the large number of Ministerial supporters in the House—we had three Ministers and two supporters. He considered that this, day after day and night after night, was not a fair thing to the Committee or to the Assembly. He would ask the Ministry to try to keep a House to show some kind of decency when matters were being discussed. In regard to the item of £62,921 from moneys to the credit of the Trust Fund, would there be any possibility of getting an amount like this again, to spend in the near future ? Did the hon. gentlemen anticipate this year that an amount would be left unspent in connection with the development of mining on the goldfields and opening up of our mineral resources, and devoted to the same purposes as this ? This £62,000 had always in the past been spent out of revenue.

THE TREASURER : There were other purposes than the development of mining.

MR. HOLMAN : The amount could have been devoted to completing some of the loan work we had at the present time. Would there be a possibility of having funds the same as these in the future ?

THE CHAIRMAN : Questions of that kind did not come within the scope of the clause.

MR. HOLMAN could prolong the debate by moving that the amount be struck out, but he did not desire to do that.

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. member could not do that.

MR. HOLMAN : It was absolutely useless discussing the Bill.

THE CHAIRMAN : The Estimates had been passed and had been reported.

MR. HOLMAN called attention to the state of the House.

THE TREASURER : Let the hon. member look at his own side.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Appropriation Bill was only a formal matter, unless one wanted to block it altogether.

Bells run and quorum formed.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—agreed to.

Schedules, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; the report adopted.

THIRD READING.

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

BILL—EXCESS (FIVE YEARS).

SECOND READING.

THE TREASURER (Hon. F. Wilson): In moving that this Bill be read a second time, I have to explain to the House that it really covers the last five years, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, and 1906. I only propose to deal very briefly with the last financial year. The previous years of course concern my predecessors, and probably these details can be explained by them if necessary, though I do not think the necessity is now apparent. The passing of Excess Bills is only a formal matter, because the whole of the expenditure covered by such excess is dealt with annually in the Auditor General's annual reports, and each year the Estimates of Expenditure cover any expenditure in excess that may be in these Bills. Last year our excess expenditure, as members will see by this Bill, was £84,307. That represents the moneys spent in excess of parliamentary authorisations. Of course the Treasurer has power under the Audit Act to transfer any surplus amounts from item to item in the same subdivision of any department, and this power has been utilised as is customary, this £84,000 being the balance which could not be so transferred. Members will remember that there is an advance account of £150,000. This expenditure is all debited against the Treasurer's advance account, and month by month at the end of each month it is transferred to its own division. This expenditure, as I before mentioned, is given in the Budget Statement. The full expenditure includes the excess expenditure, and each item is shown

in the expenditure column in the Treasurer's Estimates as having been incurred during the previous financial year. The general loan fund excesses indicate that the parliamentary appropriation has been exceeded, not the loan authorisation. For instance, if we take an item of say £30,000 as being in the Loan Bill, and if £5,000 of this amount appeared in the Loan Estimates for any given year, and if during that year say £6,000 was expended, there would be an excess of £1,000 to be passed by such a Bill as this, as against the General Loan Fund. If the loan authorisation was exceeded, this £1,000 would be a charge against the Loan Suspense Account in the Excess Bill, and, as I explained previously in respect of the Loan Suspense Account, would have to be covered by subsequent Loan Bills introduced to Parliament. That, I think, pretty clearly explains the position. In Committee I shall be glad, as well as I possibly can, to answer any questions on the items. Perhaps, to bring the matter home, I may point out an item on page 69, in the schedule for 1905-6, the financial year just past. Members will see under "Compassionate Allowances" certain items amounting in all to £592 12s. 9d.; and if they turn to the Estimates of Expenditure, page 31, the Colonial Treasurer's Department, they will find under "Compassionate Allowances" the items to which I have just referred, set down in the column for that year's expenditure, but of course not carried forward. The same course is followed throughout the Estimates. The only items that cannot be particularised are salaries, because an underdraft is set off against an overdraft, and is not shown in detail. But all contingencies are shown in the Excess Bill, in such a manner that they can be traced to the Estimates, and *vice versa*. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison): I shall not delay the House on the second reading, for I recognise this is only a formal measure. Probably it should have been brought in earlier. [THE TREASURER: Year by year.] Yes. But I intend to ask for some information on two items. Some years ago items were struck out of the Estimates when in Committee, and I find that the amounts

of these items have since been paid. The items represent pensions; and I should like to know in what position we are when we strike out items which are subsequently reinserted and paid under Form J.

THE PREMIER: None were so treated during the last three years.

MR. HOLMAN: That is so. I am now speaking of the year 1902-3; but some of the present Ministers were Ministers at that time. The Committee debated those items, though I do not think any Minister at this moment on the Treasury bench was a member of the Assembly at that time. However, I should like to know whether it is of any use to strike out an item in the Estimates, if it can be reinserted subsequently and paid without the consent of Parliament. Apparently the Government can, after going into recess, pay any amount, even if it has been struck out in Committee. If that is so, I maintain the time we spend in discussing the Estimates is almost entirely wasted, because if this can be done, unless in some very special circumstances it be necessary, striking out the items will be useless, and it will be no use our discussing the Estimates at any time. I ask for information regarding these two pensions, so as to give Ministers an opportunity of finding out why the items were reinserted after being struck out. If it was absolutely necessary to pay these pensions, I maintain it was the duty of the Government of that day to give some explanation when the House met next year, or when we discussed the next Estimates. Unless that be done, we have absolutely no control over the expenditure of public moneys. That is why I now raise the question.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair, the Treasurer in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Schedule A—agreed to.

Schedule B—Consolidated Revenue Fund, excess of expenditure 1902-3:

Items (Pensions)—Taylor, C. A., late clerk Executive Council Office, £50;

Berry, G., late clerk to Colonial Treasurer, £31 17s. 6d.:

MR. HOLMAN: Both pensions were granted under Form J. and not by Parliament. When the Estimates were discussed in December 1902 both items were struck out, he (Mr. Holman) having moved the amendments. These two officers had been in the service a few years only, and the striking out was agreed to by a majority of about two to one; yet the pensions were being paid. How was that possible; and why, if the pensions were necessary, was not some explanation given when the House re-assembled? Was it not the custom to explain such occurrences? Taylor was, it was stated, a young fellow about 24 years old; Berry had been in the service a few years only; and why should any pensions be given to such persons? The present Government were not responsible, as these cases occurred when Mr. James was Premier, the present Minister for Mines then holding the same portfolio as now. If the present Treasurer knew nothing of the subject, would he obtain information?

THE TREASURER: As stated on the second reading, it was impossible that he should have full explanatory notes on all the items. Of these two items he had no personal knowledge. If the hon. member's statements were correct, and there could be no reason to doubt them, it was very wrong for any Government to pay items after they had been struck out of the Estimates. He as Treasurer would be chary in taking such action, for he would expect to be hauled over the coals for defying the expressed will of the House. However, it was not apparent how a Government could be prevented from spending such moneys from the Treasurer's advance account. The Government were given a certain lump sum out of which they might pay extraordinary items not provided for or not foreseen; hence the Government had power to pay and might charge to excess amounts struck out by Parliament. The hon. member should have had an opportunity, when the Auditor General's report for that year came before the House, of calling attention to the items.

MR. HOLMAN: They were not mentioned in that report.

THE TREASURER: Then Excess Bills should have been brought down year by year, when the hon. member could have taken the Government to task for paying items which the Committee had refused to pass. That was the only redress members had. The Government were responsible for acts committed against the express wish of Parliament. Members knew what that meant, putting the Government out of office. If the Government had a majority behind them to say that the action of the Government was right or justifiable, then members had no redress. That was a position that always would obtain as long as we had party government.

MR. BOLTON: Was it not a fact that only one member on the Treasury bench was in power in that day?

THE TREASURER: That was the position as far as he could judge.

MR. BATH: It seemed peculiar and altogether opposed to parliamentary control over such important matters on the Estimates that after the House in Committee had struck out items, the Government could set that verdict at defiance and reinstate the items by paying them out of the Treasurer's advance account. It was evident there were many items which Parliament had not had an opportunity of pronouncing a verdict on, therefore the Excess Bill should be brought down every year. It was a peculiarly daring piece of business to which the member for Murchison had called attention, and it was one worth bringing under the notice of the Auditor General with a view to consulting the Treasurer to see if the position could not be avoided in the future. It would be impossible in an Excess Bill to get a verdict of the Committee on the question itself, so long as we had party government.

MR. HOLMAN: The Mr. Taylor referred to was in the public service at the present time. At the time the vote was taken he was a clerk in the office of the Executive Council receiving £195 per annum. He was afterwards removed and paid £130 a year in some other office, and then he was given this pension of £50 a year. That was a principle which should not be adopted in any country. This officer was only 26 years of age, and had only been in the service six years, and was granted a

pension. For all we knew he might be getting £200 a year now as well as a pension.

THE TREASURER promised to make inquiries.

MR. HOLMAN: It was impossible to do anything with the item, but we should raise these questions so that inquiries might be made.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule C—Excess expenditure 1903-4—agreed to.

Schedule D—Excess expenditure 1904-5—agreed to.

Schedule E—Excess expenditure 1905-6:

Item—Purchase of site for Geodetic Observatory, Bayswater, £171 10s.:

MR. BATH: There was a strong opinion expressed during the passage of the Estimates in the year under notice in reference to the Observatory, and the Committee was nearly wiping out the Observatory vote. Now we found the Government purchasing a site for a geodetic observatory at Bayswater.

THE PREMIER: Dr. Hessen, the astronomer, reached this State in 1905, and he was commissioned by the International Geodetic Society to establish a station here. The society had a station at Cordova in the Argentine, and the object of establishing a station here was that we were exactly 180 degrees of longitude from the station in the Argentine. It had been ascertained that the axis of the earth had a certain variation every year of about 100 degrees, involving some variation in latitude, and the object was to make a series of observations to exactly ascertain the extent of the variation. The Government with the £171 10s. purchased two blocks of land at Bayswater to recoup Dr. Hessen the cost of buildings thereon. It was expected that the observations would last two years. In a case like this it was a question of special interest in science, and it was our duty to do our part to assist the society in making its researches.

MR. BATH: Certainly if we were to become devotees of science, the explanation was satisfactory; but in these days of financial stringency, when it was diffi-

cult to secure bread-and-butter without troubling about scientific observations, it was immaterial whether scientists' opinions were that old mother earth was going to rick her back in shifting her position, or whether earthquakes were due to the same cause as stated by a prominent authority on earthquakes. Would the land obtained for this purpose be available again to the Government after the observations had been completed? If so, no money would be lost.

Item—Ministerial and Parliamentary visits, State Ceremonies, £2,000 :

MR. HOLMAN : The Treasurer had promised some information on this matter. The available information showed that during the time the Labour Government were in power they spent something like £100 in travelling about the country, and the present Government spent as much as the Labour Government did, although the Premier of the Labour Government went to Tasmania to attend a conference of Premiers. When the Minister for Mines was speaking at Nannine and Meekatharra he stated that the Parliamentary and Ministerial trips during the Labour Government's time cost considerably more than during the term of the present Government; but when the Excess Bill came down that was proved to be incorrect.

THE TREASURER : Did the Governor General visit the State during the term of the Labour Government?

MR. HOLMAN : No; but the Federal visitors, numbering 20 or 30, visited this State and were shown over it, and yet the cost of these ceremonies did not come to nearly the amount that was expended during the term of the Rason Government. In spite of that the Minister for Mines had made throughout his (Mr. Holman's) electorate the statement that the Labour Government's expenditure on this head was considerably in excess of that of previous Governments.

THE PREMIER : The people at various places entertained the Federal guests.

MR. HOLMAN : That circumstance did not alter the fact of the excess or the fact of the incorrectness of the Minister's statement.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : The statements made by himself were quite correct.

MR. HOLMAN : The Minister then stated that the Leader of the Opposition had represented Ministers as travelling about the country and spending money.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (in explanation) : In answer to certain observations of the Leader of the Opposition he had said he hoped that during next session a member of the Labour party would call for a return showing the expenses incurred by the two Governments in travelling about the country. The inference from this remark was that the expenses of the Labour Government were the heavier, but he had made no direct statement to that effect.

MR. BATH had pointed out that the work of administration was being done from Ministerial cars.

MR. HOLMAN considered that his remarks were borne out by the Minister's explanation. However, members on both sides would do well to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the industries and local conditions of the whole of Western Australia as far as possible. Yesterday's trip over the Goomalling railway, for example, yielded much insight into the construction of spur lines. It was doubtful whether, if that trip had been made prior to the construction of the line, the line would have been built at all. He now desired the promised explanation of this expenditure.

THE TREASURER : The information could not be given offhand, but he did not mind promising that a return would be got out and laid on the table of the House.

MR. BATH : Were the expenses of the Governor General's trip included in this?

THE TREASURER believed it was so, and the expenses amounted to £900 odd. It must be remembered that the Governor General visited the State just subsequently to the Labour Government's going out of office, at a time when present Ministers were seeking re-election. Therefore the arrangements for all this expenditure had been made by the Labour Government, and one would have thought very poorly of them had they not made those arrangements.

MR. HEITMANN : Anyhow, the amount was too much.

THE TREASURER : The resolution which had been referred to asked for a

return of the travelling expenses of Ministers, and of Ministers only.

MR. HOLMAN: The reason for inquiring was that attention might be drawn to the remarks of the Minister for Mines.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member would turn to 1902-3 figures he would see expenses in connection with Federal visitors to the Goldfields Water Supply, £4,200.

Item—Pombart, J. E., Special Allowances in lieu of Reinstatement in the Public Service, and in satisfaction and discharge of all claims whatever against the Government, £750:

MR. JOHNSON: As the result of a discussion in Parliament, a distinct understanding was arrived at that the adoption of the select committee's report on Pombart's case carried with it not reinstatement but reappointment. He had had this expressly recorded, because he appreciated that reinstatement carried with it the payment of an amount of something like the £750 which had been donated to Mr. Pombart.

THE TREASURER remembered the debate on this matter. A select committee was appointed, and that committee recommended reasonable compensation. Parliament endorsed the recommendation that Mr. Pombart should be fairly dealt with by the Government of the day. This was a legacy, he thought, from the Labour Government.

MR. JOHNSON: No; from the James Government.

THE TREASURER: No. Mr. Moran, when member for West Perth, obtained a select committee to inquire into the case, and in pursuance of the committee's recommendation this settlement was arrived at. The question was submitted, he believed, to the Crown law authorities, who advised as to responsibilities under the resolution of the House and under the claim. This settlement was made as carrying out the intention of the House.

MR. JOHNSON: Admittedly there was no use in discussing the matter, but the House distinctly laid down that no such sum as this should be paid. The resolution was that Mr. Pombart should be fairly treated by the Government, and

that resolution was interpreted to mean reappointment in the service.

THE TREASURER: Who interpreted the resolution?

MR. JOHNSON: A perusal of the discussion would show. Mr. Moran had moved a motion carrying with it reinstatement—in effect, that Mr. Pombart should be reinstated as from the day on which he had been dismissed by the James Government. Attention being called to this by him (Mr. Johnson), Mr. Moran said that the motion meant nothing of the sort, but only reappointment. The then Government, on the distinct understanding that only reappointment was implied, accepted the motion, which consequently was carried. The decision of Parliament had been ignored. He mentioned the matter to show that the direct instruction of the House carried no weight with certain Ministers.

THE TREASURER: Not an instruction of the House, but the instruction of Mr. Moran's statement.

MR. JOHNSON: The instruction was that of the House, and not that of Mr. Moran; and it was perfectly clear. A reference to *Hansard* would show exactly what transpired.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: While the hon. member (Mr. Johnson) had stated that the resolution provided for Mr. Pombart's reappointment, and not for his reinstatement, the effect of the motion carried on the select committee's report was that Mr. Pombart was entitled to reinstatement in the Crown Law Department. What was the meaning of reinstatement? Reinstatement as of old; not reappointment to any position which the Government might offer, but reinstatement in the Crown Law Department.

MR. BATH: The hon. gentleman should read Mr. Moran's statement.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: What was the value of any statement made by a member, or even by a Minister, in regard to such a matter as this? The record in the Votes and Proceedings was that Mr. Moran moved—

That this House agrees with the opinion expressed by the select committee appointed last year to inquire into the retirement of Mr. J. E. Pombart from the Public Service, to the

effect that Mr. Pombart was entitled to reinstatement in the Crown Law Department.

That was the instruction sent from this House to the Public Service Commissioner; and of course the inference was that Mr. Pombart must be reinstated in the service to a position certainly not less than that which he had held before. Personally he (the Minister) regretted that the motion was passed, and he had never agreed with it, deeming the action taken in previous years warranted. However, there was no use going into details now. He had been much averse to the payment of this money, but there was no escape if the resolution of the House was to be carried out. The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) must take a share of any blame. No other course was open to the present Government. A position was not available for Mr. Pombart, and compensation had to be paid him on a basis fixed (if he remembered rightly) by the Public Service Commissioner.

MR. HOLMAN: We all remembered the matter coming up time and again in the old Chamber.

MR. STONE: It had been before Parliament six years.

MR. HOLMAN: All the select committee had required was that Mr. Pombart should be given a public service position equal in status to that he had held, no recompense being suggested for the time he had lost. Mr. Hastie, then Minister for Justice, offered him a position at Yalgoo with a salary of some £4 a week, but the offer was declined. The sum of £750 was paid in lieu of reinstatement.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: On account of the motion passed by the House.

MR. HOLMAN: The Public Service Commissioner had expressed the opinion that Mr. Pombart was not entitled to consideration. The amount paid was large.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Pombart ought not to have received anything.

MR. HOLMAN: Why then was he compensated? The adoption of the report did not force the Government to carry out the recommendation. The Government were responsible for the expendi-

ture. Many reports of select committees were presented and dropped, as in the case of Mrs. Tracey, who was probably more worthy of consideration than Mr. Pombart.

MR. JOHNSON: *Hansard* fully bore out his statement. When speaking on the motion of Mr. Moran, he clearly laid before the House that the Labour Government were not deeply interested in the matter, but felt it their duty to explain what the motion if carried meant to the country, the payment of a large sum to Mr. Pombart. In reply Mr. Moran said the only desire was to reinstate Mr. Pombart as a senior officer, not as a junior, so that he might be protected in the event of retrenchment. Nought else was asked for, unless the Government liked of their own volition to apply to the House for a sum by way of compensation. Mr. Watts, then member for Northam, moved that the words "but without any payment for the interval between suspension and such reinstatement" be inserted; but Mr. Moran said the amendment was unnecessary, because reinstatement as a senior, without compensation, at a salary of some £250 a year, would be satisfactory. This clearly showed the decisions of Parliament were not final, but could be overridden by Cabinet. Members should realise that Parliament were not all-powerful, and that, as in the Pombart case, the intentions and instructions of the House could be disregarded.

THE PREMIER: By Mr. Rason's Government Mr. Pombart was offered a subordinate position, which he would not accept, having been out of the service for about two and a-half years. The Rason Government were threatened with a lawsuit unless he received compensation. It was granted reluctantly, after most careful inquiry and consultation with the law officers, because the Government were opposed to the finding of the select committee, considering that the compensation claim was exorbitant. The £750 practically amounted to Mr. Pombart's salary for two and a-half years.

Item—Fencing Fremantle Jetty, £250:

MR. JOHNSON: The old Fremantle jetty was useless. Parliament had refused to authorise this expenditure, yet now it appeared as an excess.

THE TREASURER: This was expenditure on the long or "sea" jetty, taken from the harbour trust and vested in the Fremantle municipality, by whom it was made a useful promenade. Without a fence it would have been dangerous. Swimming baths were now being erected there.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedules F to end—agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; the report adopted.

THIRD READING.

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

BILL—COOLGARDIE-NORSEMAN RAILWAY.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) in moving the second reading said: For a considerable number of years the proposed railway to Norseman has been a subject of discussion both in and out of Parliament. First it was considered the line would materially assist the mines on the Norseman Goldfield; secondly, that it would open up the large mining, timber, and firewood forests between Coolgardie and Norseman, while it would revive mining operations on some properties abandoned because of the heavy charge for transporting machinery to the mines. Of this district I have not so full a knowledge as is possessed by many of my friends opposite; but my personal acquaintance with that portion of the country dates back to 1892, when I went through with the object of defining the limits of the Hampton Plains lands, and of ascertaining whether the new find known as Bayley's was or was not on the property of the Hampton Plains Company. It is a well-known matter of history now that it was found that the new find, afterwards known as Coolgardie, was one and a quarter miles within the limits of the Crown lands, west of the Hampton Plains boundary. My last visit was some few months ago, accompanied by some members of the House, with the object of ascertaining and making inquiry as to the advisability of recommending Cabinet to bring down this Bill for the

construction of this railway. It was in 1899 that the Forrest Government first introduced a Loan Bill which provided for the construction of this line. After passing this Chamber the Norseman Railway item was struck out by one vote in another place. In September 1900 Sir John Forrest again introduced a Bill having for its object the early construction of the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, but it was defeated by five votes. In the following month, October 1900, a motion was carried in the Legislative Council to the effect that a railway be constructed from Coolgardie southward *via* Burbanks and London derry, towards Norseman, for a distance of at least 25 miles. That was adopted by 19 votes to 6, but it was eventually ruled out of order. Ever since then the residents of the Dundas Goldfield and of Norseman in particular have endeavoured as far as possible to keep the matter before the minds of the public by drawing attention to the heavy tax which has to be endured by the mining industry consequent on the isolation of the gold field, and to the heavy cost incurred of the cartage of machinery and the necessities of life. Although a small portion of the goods required for Norseman have been conveyed *via* Esperance, the vast bulk comes from Coolgardie, which has ever been looked upon as the distributing centre for the Dundas field. However, up to date the freight have been so excessive as to practically cripple development, and at all events preclude the working of small mining propositions at a profit. The Labour Government, led by the member for Subiaco, last year decided that it was advisable that they should make some inquiries as to the advisability or otherwise of constructing a railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, and with that object in view a board was appointed, consisting of the Engineer-in-Chief, the State Mining Engineer, and the district Traffic Manager, Mr. Douglas. Those gentlemen sent in separate reports, the Engineer-in-Chief in regard to the cost of construction, and the State Mining Engineer in regard to whether he considered the construction of this line would materially assist mining development, while the District Traffic Manager confined his report to the probable traffic and the

working expenses in connection with the proposed railway. This report was duly presented to the Government and was afterwards printed and laid on the table of the House, and is now available for hon. members. Although it was estimated then by those gentlemen that it could not possibly be a payable proposition or provide working expenses, interest on cost of construction, and one per cent. sinking fund, it was recognised that the district, owing to its isolated position and the high rates of carriage and the consequent high costs generally, had been handicapped to a great extent, and that the construction of a railway would remove those disadvantages and materially increase the development of the field and its prosperity. Since that report was made, as members are aware a new field has broken out some 60 miles along the route, known as Higginsville, where there are at present about 150 to 200 men. Consequently we may assume that if those experts were reporting at the present time they would be able to tell a much better tale in regard to the probable traffic as well as in regard to the development of the field. They pointed out that consideration should be given to the fact that the State would indirectly benefit by a decrease in the rates of cartage on all classes of goods. It was shown that on something like 2,000 tons of material £10,000 was paid for cartage, at a rate of £5 per ton more than it would have been if the same material had been conveyed by rail. If a saving of £5 per ton could be thus effected by having a railway, it would have its immediate effect on the development of the district, and the State generally would derive benefit from it. The expert officers, while not seeing the possibility of deriving any great revenue from firewood, remarked that "with the fine belt of timber between Londonderry and Norseman, the mines would have no fear of the failure of their firewood supply." I recently asked the forest ranger of the district, Mr. Kelso, than whom no one has a better knowledge of the mining timber areas, for a report in connection with the firewood supply, and he stated that "at the rate at which timber is being consumed on the Golden Mile, it was only a question of time when the mines must extend their operations in regard to

firewood, and that the construction of this line would mean that an almost unlimited supply would be provided for many years to come." Mr. Kelso said:—

The southern boundary of the Burbanks State Forest crosses the surveyed line about the 14 mile in first-class timber. From this point to the 26 mile will be opened to the cutters for the Boulder mines; and by cutting out to a three miles lead on either side of the line, and carting into sidings about four miles apart, an area of 72 miles will be brought within the zone of operations.

This country, Mr. Kelso estimates, will cut out at 2,600 tons per mile, representing a total tonnage of 187,200 tons. The freight on this at 1½d. equals £15,600, irrespective of revenue that would be derived from the rents for sidings. Mr. Kelso estimates that the Burbanks mine will take, on an average, about two trucks per day, 14 tons, and that this will come in from the State Forest on the minimum charge. He estimates that the Coolgardie consumption will be about the same, with the same freight charge, and that the Norseman mines will probably use about three trucks per day on the minimum freight. Speaking of the mining timber, Mr. Kelso says:—

The mining timber along the whole route of the railway is of exceptionally good quality, mostly sound and free from gum veins and cup shakes, and quite equal to the class of mining timber brought up to the fields from sidings westward of Southern Cross.

Any member who has had an opportunity of passing through the very fine forests which this line will traverse will be able to bear out that report. I had recently an opportunity of inspecting some of the logs brought into the small benches they had erected on some of the mines at Norseman, and I was surprised to notice the size of the logs, and how sound they were, and how free from gum and shakes. The timber was quite equal to our tuart, and must be a great factor in assisting mining development on that particular field. At the conclusion of the report of the board of inquiry, it was emphasised that the line could not be expected to become a payable proposition, but it was recognised that few of the lines in the State were payable propositions when constructed, and that the development of the country by means of railways is a necessity to enable the State to advance and progress.

That statement must be admitted by all as a reasonable one, and looking back at the revenue returns from the lines which have been constructed for a few years, it will be found that their contention is proved. I went to the trouble of seeing what the freight returns were on the South-Western Railway when it was first constructed. It was opened to traffic on the 28th August, 1893. The total cost of this line, by the way, was something like £410,148, or £2.612 per mile. Since then many improvements have been made. The traffic for the first completed year's working amounted to £21,684, while the traffic during 1903-4, the last year during which sectional earnings were kept separate, was £243,188, or twelve times the traffic hauled over that railway in the first year after its construction. That goes a long way to support the contention, which we must all recognise is a good one, that if a railway is constructed it must lead to increased traffic. The length of the proposed line from Coolgardie to Norseman is some 107 miles. From the printed statement laid before them, members will be able to arrive at an idea of the cost. This line will be some 363 miles from Fremantle. We will have 45lb. rails, while the ruling gradients will be one in 40, and the sharpest curves will have a 15-chain radius. There is no reason why we should have anything sharper in the shape of curves in that particular country, though we recognise that in some of the hilly country of the State it will be necessary to reduce the radius to 10 chains instead of 15. The estimated cost of construction is £81,000, and rails and fastenings £66,500, or a total cost of £147,500. It was considered at one time that it would be advisable to put down 33lb. rails on this railway, but after giving due consideration to the fact that it would only mean a saving of about £140 a mile, and that it would entail additional sleepers being used, and that it would mean that it would not be advisable to use some of the heavy rolling-stock such as we have on the goldfields railways at present for this traffic to Norseman, it was considered false economy to have anything lighter than 45 lb. rails. For the first 12 miles the route bears in a southerly direction, passing close to the townships of Burbanks

(six miles) and Londonderry Tank (11½ miles), thence proceeding in a southeasterly direction to Widgemooltha (51 miles). From there it goes in a generally southerly direction, and 10 to 15 miles from Widgemooltha a deviation has been made to tap the Higginsville field. This field is something like four miles distant from the original survey, but the deviation will commence a considerable distance back from a point opposite Higginsville; consequently it will add very little practically to the total length of the line. Proceeding on, it passes close to the Pioneer or 50-Mile Rocks (79 miles), where there is a magnificent dam; thence on to the 15-mile condenser (92 miles) and across Lake Cowan, near what is known as the Causeway (102 miles), and thence direct to Norseman. At Londonderry, Widgemooltha, and Pioneer there are dams having a capacity of 3,000,000 gallons, and at the last-mentioned place water could be almost exclusively used for locomotive purposes. I understand there is a good supply of water available there for the whole of the year. The most economical estimate of the cost of construction by the board of inquiry was £186,000, and that provided for 45lb. rails, an average of £1,740 per mile. Members will consequently see that our proposal is considerably less. We maintain that the engineers are erring on the safe side, and that it will be found possible to make the construction at a good deal less than we have put on the Estimates. I see no reason why that line should cost any more than the others with the exception of the additional cost of the freight on the rails taken there and the higher price we may have to pay for labour, which I may take it may be 20 per cent. on the ruling rate on the coast, that is to say that while we give navvies 8s. a day in the coastal districts, we may have to pay 10s. a day on this goldfield. Looking at the question from a mining point of view, I may say that there are 87 mining leases representing an area of 1,837 acres in that district, and there are 14 more leases representing 144 acres being applied for. There are 20 homestead leases representing 844 acres, and all of these will be accommodated by the railway. At Higginsville, a new centre, there are in existence 12 gold-mining

leases representing 144 acres, while 10 gold-mining leases representing 161 acres are being applied for. Of pastoral leases there are 152,000 acres held, and 50,000 acres available within the influence of this line. Turning to what the Dundas Goldfield has produced, I am informed that this field has contributed 290,862 fine ounces of gold to the State's gold yield, valued at £1,235,503, made up as follows:—Norseman mining centres, 276,167 ounces, valued at £1,173,083; Dundas, 2,616 ounces, valued at £11,112; while the remaining mining centres of the Dundas Goldfield have produced 12,079 ounces, of the value of £51,308. Besides this amount of gold-mining there are centres on the Coolgardie Goldfield which will be affected by this line. Widgemooltha Goldfield has produced 4,082 ounces, of the value of £17,339; Londonderry, £17,977 ounces, valued at £59,371; while Burbanks has produced 170,074 ounces, valued at £730,924. The new find which was discovered at Higginsville has already yielded 1,774 fine ounces of gold valued at £7,408. This new district gives every promise of great development. A new find has been made quite recently at Sampys, close to Higginsville, which gives promise of great development. Several shows have been systematically worked, and stone crushed at the Sons of Erin mine has given 15 to 20 dwts. to the ton. The State battery returns at Norseman to the 30th September 1906 amounted to 23,857 tons treated, 24,819ozs. of gold won, valued at £92,534, whilst there are 16,332 tons of sands treated for £12,150 worth of bullion. Apart from the published returns of the leading mines it has been ascertained that there has been a balance of roundly 60,000ozs. of gold bullion from a large number of smaller mines scattered over a belt of country some 23 miles in length, extending from Dundas in the south to the Peninsula in the north. Many of these are very promising prospecting proposition only requiring active development to become important mines. These are the words of a unbiased judge in the person of the State Mining Engineer, Mr. Montgomery. He states:—

The Norseman field suffers very severely on account of its isolated position, as previously stated, in several important particulars. There

are two days expensive travelling by coach from Coolgardie, or five days walking to be undertaken by men wishing to try there for employment, and consequently the supply of casual labour is very limited, and creates a problem difficult of solution when men are wanted without delay.

In addition to this he points out the fact that investors looking for investment will not go to Norseman, considering the fact that it means five days travelling before they are able to get to and from Coolgardie to that field, therefore they are likely to pass that locality by in favour of other localities more easy of access. The high freights on goods necessarily have a great effect on the cost of living, and I understand the arbitration award for this field is on the highest scale.

MR. HOLMAN: Don't talk about something you know nothing about. It is not.

THE PREMIER: What is the highest? It is the highest award south of the Murchison. Let me quote one illustration:—

Coke costing £4 2s. 6d. in Fremantle costs £12 10s. in Norseman, as will be seen from the following cost of five tons of coke:—Cost, Fremantle, £20 12s. 6d.; railage Fremantle to Coolgardie, £8 2s. 6d.; agency and charges, £3 15s.; cartage at £6 per ton, £30; total, £62 10s. Cement costing 12s. 6d. per barrel in Fremantle costs £2 16s. in Norseman. Firebricks costing £3 17s. 6d. per thousand at Fremantle cost £34 19s. per thousand delivered on the mines.

Mr. Montgomery in the course of his report in giving information in regard to what some of the mines have spent in the way of wages and freight, says that up to 1902 the Norseman mine spent £106,000 in wages, £60,000 in stores, and in plant and machinery £39,000, or a total expenditure between Coolgardie and Londonderry of £197,000. The tonnage crushed to the same date was 73,407 tons on which the cost of carriage was £17,707, constituting a charge on every ton of ore crushed of 4s. 10d. per ton. Had there been railway communication the cost would have been under 5d. per ton. The actual cost of freight is not the only handicap that the people labour under. We know that where it is necessary to obtain duplicate parts of machinery, besides the cost entailed there is a considerable amount of delay. While in that district instances were brought

under my notice that owing to the fact that it was not possible to obtain duplicate pieces of machinery, in some cases as much as £300 was expended in struggling to carry on the work, whereas if the machinery could have been promptly attended to that would have been saved. The State Mining Engineer in concluding his personal report on the railway states "That the railway to Norseman will be an enormous benefit to the field goes almost without saying, and there can be little question that its construction will lead to a great expansion of mining there." This is the point I would like to draw members attention to. He states:—

The field is easily able to support ten times its population, and there are enormous promising reefs waiting the attention of companies with capital to give them proper mining equipment, and see them through the initial development stages out of which several important mines may be expected to eventuate. Under existing circumstances the cost of equipping a mine with machinery is so excessive that it can hardly be wondered at investors taking their attention elsewhere.

The estimated revenue set down by the members on the board which was appointed amounts to £5,000; but I think that is ridiculously low in some instances they have quoted. In arriving at the estimate of what the revenue would be, they give an instance that at the present time as far as the passengers are concerned there are something like two passengers per week travelling between Norseman and Coolgardie per coach. Considering there are 1,600 to 2,000 persons living 100 miles from the communication, I think it means instead of four passengers per week, with railway communication there is likely to be 100 passengers per week. When I was down in the district in September last I was struck by the amount of traffic along the road. We passed about 400 camels on the way down taking stores, and the freight on those stores alone would amount to a considerable sum, as people were paying in most cases £7 a ton for every ton of stuff carried. As far as the properties inspected are concerned I would like to refer to one mine, the Lady Miller leases. In the opinion of mining men, if this mine was in Kalgoorlie, instead of employing as it does from 10 to 15 men it would be employing something like 200 to 300. To work

this property it is necessary to have a 20-head mill, together with all modern appliances. Four hundred tons of machinery will probably be necessary, and if the shareholders had to pay £7 10s. per ton for the cartage it would mean something like £3,000, while with railway freight at the present rate that machinery would be landed at Norseman for £350 as against £3,000, which would be the cost at present. It is estimated that this lease would alone keep something like 30 head of stamps continually going. The lode on this property varies from 10 feet to 40 feet in width. At the time of my visit there were 4,511 tons accumulated, whilst the tailings were estimated to be worth another 4dwts. per ton. As an evidence that this mine is watched, it is stated that during the last month this lease was sold to an English company who are prepared to place plant worth £30,000 thereon, and they are making inquiries with a view to making extensive purchases in the neighbourhood of Miroo. Another proposition, the Mararoa, is similarly situated to the Lady Miller, and is handicapped by reason of the lack of facilities for economical transport of mining machinery etc., and the remarks with respect to the cost of equipment of the Lady Miller apply equally to the Mararoa. Six thousand seven hundred and six tons from this mine yielded 3,019 tons by battery treatment, and the tailings are reported to be worth 30s. per ton. There are several members more intimately acquainted with this particular district who will be able to indorse what I have said, and bring other instances before members as to the necessity that exists for giving railway facilities to this field. I have already referred to the fact that since the report has been made a new locality has broken out at Higginsville, and something like 150 men are employed there. Stores and a hotel and other conveniences are fast being provided. I would like to say in conclusion that for over 10 years the people of Norseman have struggled against adverse circumstances as an evidence of their faith in the district in mining properties alone. Quite recently they have provided something like £11,000, subscribed by business men of the town and by men working on the mines; and the mere fact of this subscription is evidence

that the people have faith in their district, and we ought to assist those who are prepared to assist themselves. Such a district, with many development shows, low-grade propositions, alluvial deposits, and vast timber and firewood resources, presents most favourable openings for new mining developments, and justifies the Government in asking Parliament to authorise the construction of the railway at the earliest possible moment. For that reason we have placed this line at the head of our developmental railways. Lastly, a simple indorsement of the proposal for the construction of this railway to Norseman binds no member to vote for a farther extension of the line in a southerly direction. The mere fact that the people of Norseman are situated between Coolgardie and Esperance ought not to imply that they are to be isolated for ever, and I take it that this House in its wisdom will indorse the proposal now made, and will give to these people who have struggled against hard luck for the past ten or eleven years, the railway facilities that are so essential if Norseman is not to be wiped out of existence. For it is not a question of merely helping the community ahead. The position is simply this: without railway facilities the Norseman mines will have to close down. I hope the House will recognise the position, and pass this Bill for the construction of the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway.

MR. W. T. EDDY (Coolgardie): With many others, I hope this Bill will be passed. The goldfields people are indeed pleased that the Bill has at last been introduced, and that there is now a likelihood of their getting the railway. After all the years of battling, more particularly by goldfields people, the hope of the people of Norseman seems at last about to be realised. The Norseman fields have been worked since 1893, and for 13 years the people of Norseman have been plugging on. As stated by the Premier, the Reappropriation Bill of 1898, nine years ago, provided an amount of £5,000 for a railway survey from Coolgardie to Norseman. Sir John Forrest, as has been stated, carried that proposal through the Assembly; but it was rejected by the Upper House, which at the same time threw out several other

Bills dealing with goldfields railways. Those other rejected proposals have since been accepted and executed, and have proved successful lines. I state this now merely to show that a lot of voting took place at the particular time by members of another place, and I may say they recorded many votes on subjects of which they knew but little. In 1896 the Norseman Railway was considered of such importance as to justify its mention in the Governor's Speech, and an amount of £60,000 was proposed for the preliminary work in connection with it. In 1900, again a Bill for its construction was defeated by a narrow majority. In debating the Bill then several members expressed themselves that the line ought to be built, but they voted against it because they considered the starting point should be Esperance; and, later, a motion to this effect was carried in the Upper House by a large majority, as the Premier stated. I desire to point out here that whenever votes have been taken on this matter various other important issues were at stake; and now there is occasion to be glad that we have brought before Parliament a direct proposition involving no outside issues of prominence. The feeling in favour of this railway is I believe almost unanimous throughout the whole State—not only in the mining centres but also in the coastal and agricultural districts it is considered that the railway is now warranted. In my opinion no goldfield outside the big centre of Kalgoorlie shows greater possibilities than that of the Norseman country. The Premier has given figures showing that an amount of almost 1½ millions has been produced by the field. Looking back to the year 1899 we have the biggest amount that came from Norseman—44,214 ounces, of an approximate value of £177,000. The people of Norseman were then anticipating that the railway was coming along. From that time, unfortunately, not getting the railway, developments have not been so extensive. Men holding shows have been compelled by circumstances to depart and let their shows remain undeveloped. Norseman is now down to almost half the amount of its highest gold production. The figures of 1899 will, I believe, be considerably increased when the railway does arrive

there should be considerably more than 44,000 ounces produced by Norseman annually as soon as the railway is provided. Farther, I wish to point out in reference to this railway proposition that goldfields lines are the best-paying this State has. Even if the line now proposed will not be the asset-producer that we expect it to be and that most of its supporters believe it will be, its construction is something due to the district. I see no danger in passing the amount of money required for the construction of the line, and I feel sure that our most sanguine hopes will be realised, for everything points to a payable and prosperous goldfield at Norseman and in the district generally. I do not know whether any opposition will be forthcoming to this Bill, but if there is I am certain it will be of a healthy nature. I hope the question will be fairly and honestly debated. There has been for years a feeling in Parliament, as regards this railway, that there was a danger of its connection with Esperance. As stated, I believe in the past many members fought hard and voted against the construction of this railway with only one object. They had no fear as to the success of the Norseman mines, but they thought the centres of this State were getting too close to the coast, too near to the Eastern States, and they voted against this railway on that excuse alone. In my opinion, it is regrettable that such a feeling should ever crop up; it is almost pitiable, one might say, that members of Parliament should have voted against the construction of this railway simply on that ground. I desire to inform the House that at Norseman everything is prepared and in readiness and waiting for the construction of this railway. Norseman has a State battery, and other heads of stamps are ready and will be quickly at work when the construction of the line has been brought about. Certain other matters one might point out. An amount of £10,000 was put on last year's Estimates, or those of the year before last, for the upkeep of the road from Coolgardie to Norseman. An amount of £2,000 has been spent in that direction, leaving an unexpended balance of £800. That money need now not be expended, although it appears on the Estimates. Farther, as the Premier

pointed out, the water dams on the road to Norseman are in good order and condition, and plenty of them; in fact, the members of the party which accompanied the Premier to Norseman were much struck by the enormous dam near Norseman—hundreds of thousands of gallons of water lying as it were to waste, and made no use of. The report which has been mentioned by the Premier hon. members will, I think, agree was not a true or fair one. That report estimates the number of people travelling on the road from Coolgardie to Norseman at about two per week, which estimate at once makes the report ridiculous. As the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) pointed out, it is well known that hundreds of men on bicycles are passing to and fro on this road, also many men adopting the old style of swaggers walking along with teams, and also men travelling camels, though certainly there are not many white men doing this. The Premier pointed out that it would be fairer to estimate the number of men constantly travelling on that road at 100 or more weekly. Put this against the two estimated in the report. In addition, there are men who cannot afford to travel by coach because the coach fare alone from Norseman to Coolgardie is a matter of £3.

MR. HOLMAN: The coaches used to run passengers down for about 10s.

MR. BATH: I understood the coach fare to be £5.

MR. EDDY: I believe as little as 10s. may have been charged, but that was owing to a cutting of rates similar to that in process now amongst the insurance companies.

MR. BATH: Three pounds is a cheap coach fare for the distance.

MR. EDDY: Whether cheap or dear I do not know, but many poor men I do know cannot afford to pay the fare; they have to take to the "bluey" and adopt the old style of swaggers. Hon. members who may not care to accept my statement, and other statements that will be made here regarding the possibilities of this line, will I hope inspect this and all other railway propositions to be submitted. I do not ask members to accept my word as to the possibilities. I would much prefer that all hon. members would go to Norseman and judge for themselves

as to the merits or demerits of that country. Speaking as a Coolgardie man, I find even now in Coolgardie business men objecting to the proposition. The Premier must have particularly observed this spirit of objection, for after 50 miles of the journey to Norseman had been completed we fell in with a coach proprietor, who, having a big interest, objected strongly to the construction of the railway. But when you come to analyse the whole of those objections you find they were from personal motives alone, and I know myself it will be a big injury to me as a business man in Coolgardie, but I believe we should drop personal feeling in this matter. It will be a loss to me in a way, I believe, considering that my business is one of the principal businesses in Coolgardie; but we look at things, as I hope we all shall, from a wider, more logical, and more reasonable and patriotic point of view than that. Speaking generally, I believe that the future prospects of this railway are assured, and that the old coastal jealousy which perhaps did exist has been entirely wiped away, and the people resident in Fremantle and Perth who have had some fear in the past that a railway of the kind may injure our port here have nothing at all to fear in that direction. Surely we have no fear as far as this city and Fremantle are concerned. Fremantle is the nearest point to the outside world, and I believe that when the docks are constructed we shall have one of the finest ports and cities in the world.

MR. BOLTON: When the dock is constructed.

MR. EDDY: Speaking of the future, the building of railways will in my opinion be of great importance and a big factor for the future prosperity of this State. I expect in years to come to see a network of railways connecting all the agricultural districts with the goldfields people. Even a line of railway from Norseman to Albany is a proposition I believe not many years distant, connecting the goldfields with big belts of agricultural country. In reference to the carriage of foodstuffs, particulars have been quoted by the Premier, and those members who know the hard work and the big payments that miners have to make in distant parts must

be impressed with the fact that the railway will mean a complete reduction in the cost of carriage of all foodstuffs to those distant goldfields, for railway connection always brings with it a greater population. We know that on the Norseman line to-day there are very few travellers indeed. The miners and other men are not in a position to bring their families and settle there, but when this railway is brought to Norseman it will mean an increase of population fourfold or fivefold, and I do not think I should be saying too much if I said it would be tenfold in the course of a few years. Apart altogether from the possibility of that field we have enough wood on that land alone to supply the whole of the belt of the goldfields around Kalgoorlie and the big central mining districts for the next 25 years. This factor in itself should prevent any objection to the building of the line. I mean that it would be an asset in itself, and the carriage of that wood along the line to the destination of the several mines would be a return to the railway. The Premier also spoke of the Afghans, and it is quite true that there are Afghans who own 400 camels on that road. In 1899 there were 700 camels. Just to make a point here, if I may be allowed so to do, as to a white Australia, at the present moment Afghans are carrying over that line over 100 tons per trip, which takes about eight or nine days, showing that we are paying to these foreigners alone £700 or £800. I do not propose to labour the subject any farther. I am sure that this line would be supported by able debaters than myself, men who I know are in favour of this line, and, as I have said, I hope that there will be no serious objection to it. We have nothing to fear by the construction of this line, and I believe that when carried into effect it will mean the development of a field perhaps not up to the standard of Kalgoorlie, but a proposition which members will not regret assisting.

MR. A. A. HORAN (Yilgarn): I have only a word or two to say with regard to this proposition; principally with respect to the report, which naturally might be supposed, having been obtained from alleged experts, to be of some value. I have not read it for the last 12 months

or so, but if my memory serves me aright it was grossly misleading as to the probable receipts. One lost sight of the population of Burbanks, and no less than a motor-car service is required between Kalgoorlie and Burbanks. I mentioned this to the officer, and it was explained that there was some difficulty with regard to the letters of reference sent, and that the officials were expected to report upon the position of things as they were, and not as to what the future might be. Under these circumstances, bound up with red-tape and so forth, it was likely that such an absurd estimate as that would be sent to the Government. There was another phase of the question too as far as the traffic receipts were concerned which was entirely overlooked, namely that the railway if constructed would be a feeder to the trunk line, that there would be much larger traffic for the trunk line as well as the additional traffic that would be obtained for the branch line. That was a thing which was overlooked apparently, and the report as far as that phase of the question is concerned was not worth the paper it was written on. The papers read and the figures given by the Premier are so convincing that apparently no members feel disposed to oppose the construction of the line. He mentioned that fivepence I think would be the cost of a ton per mile as against 4s. 10d. now. From personal investigation and contact with mining managers and others I am satisfied that there would be an enormous development, if the expectation is realised as to the carriage of machinery at reasonable rates and expedition. There has been machinery in all directions on the road. Only last year when the ordinary Estimates were being prepared I submitted that £10,000 should be provided for the repair of roads through my district as an alternative to the Norseman railway. I am pleased to find that the alternative to that expenditure is now approaching consummation, and I suppose that the £10,000 will be laid aside. The cost of upkeep for roads in that district would be quite as much as the cost of maintenance of the railway; and the initial cost of the making of the road would nearly approach that of the railway which is to be constructed, the charge for the railway being extremely low. The line in

the district to be traversed will, as the Premier pointed out, lead to good development in the future. I think that under the circumstances, there being a general unanimity of opinion throughout the House, the proposal will be carried.

At 6-25, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

MR. C. A. HUDSON (Dundas): The other evening, when discussing the Loan Estimates, a question arose whether the inclusion of certain railway projects in those Estimates would involve holding out to the people in the districts concerned a promise that the Government would construct the railways. I venture to say, if there is anything in that argument, it applies with tenfold force to the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway project; because, as the Premier said when tracing the history of the line, it has been promised for practically ten years to the people of Norseman. Off and on the project has been introduced to this Assembly by various Governments, and on two occasions it has been agreed to by the House. When it was introduced by Sir John Forrest in 1900, he as Premier had visited the district, had seen all the localities which could be served by the line, and in this House spoke strongly in favour of its construction. I will not delay the House by reading his speech; but he said the line was warranted by the mineral resources of the district, and would be advantageous not only to the people of Norseman but to the whole of the State. If the line were justified in 1900, when it was promised, I think it is more fully justified now. No other railway project in this State has been submitted to more searching inquiry than has the Coolgardie-Norseman line. On nearly every occasion when it was mentioned in the Governor's Speech, or introduced by motion in the Chamber, visits were made to the district by various officials; and during the *regime* of the Labour Government a special board was appointed to inquire into the subject. In his speech to-night the Premier enlarged on the result of that inquiry, telling the House the report was favourable; and I recommend a perusal of that report to any member who has any doubts or qualms on the subject;

because, if any railways are to be built for the development of the State, the Coolgardie-Norseman is one which claims immediate attention. The district has not only minerals but timber resources which will be of great value to the mineral belt surrounding Kalgoorlie. The Premier pointed out properly that no railway project can be shown to be absolutely justified on the ground that it will be a payable proposition from the jump; and very few railways have proved payable from the jump in this or any other young country. Mr. Montgomery (State Mining Engineer), in his report, states there is a belt of mineral country along the whole route of the line. There is not only one centre to be served, but a long auriferous belt, extending, as this experienced and unprejudiced authority says, throughout the whole length of the line. That report was furnished two years ago, and since then, by degrees, his prophecy has been fulfilled, inasmuch as the Higginsville field has been opened up, farther developments have taken place south of Burbanks, while at Widge-mooltha have been found additional prospects not only of quartz reefs but of alluvial gold. The test of the stability of a district is, I think, whether it is able to live by itself, whether it is able to do something to justify its existence. And if that test be applied to the Norseman district, the Dundas Goldfield, I am sure the country will not be found wanting. It has produced twice as much gold as would pay for its railway, and more—a total of 1½ million pounds worth of gold. The people of the district, numbering between 1,800 and 2,000, have been working under great disadvantages. Some of these have been enumerated; the exceedingly high cost of cartage, the present average being from Coolgardie to Norseman £7 10s. per ton, while the rate has been as high as £20. In these circumstances, if a field can continue to maintain a gold output, I am sure it will commend itself to every member as a field well deserving of a railway; and all will admit that to deprive it of its promised railway would be altogether unjust. Other speakers have dealt more or less exhaustively with the subject, but I may perhaps enlarge on one or two of the points mentioned. Some members who recently visited the district had an oppor-

tunity of seeing a few of the mines. They inspected those which could be seen in daylight, the expedition commencing about 10 in the morning and finishing about 5 p.m. It is needless to say it was impossible for those members, including the Premier, to make anything like an adequate inspection of the locality, especially when, as will be seen from the report of Mr. Montgomery, in the Norseman district alone is an auriferous belt 20 miles in extent. The average gold yield is over 1oz. for every ton mined. Many propositions are now being worked which were not inspected by the Premier and party; and of these some are producing from three to four ounces per ton, and one in particular recently crushed about 500 tons, without cyaniding, and without sands and slimes, for nearly two ounces per ton. There is a number of others similarly situated. One mentioned particularly to-night by the Premier is known as the Lady Miller, a proposition which requires much capital for its thorough development; and the object of the railway, I take it, is the development of the mineral resources of the country. For that purpose we must have cheap modes of treatment, which are possible only by the application of the best machinery and up-to-date gold-saving apparatus. It is impossible to deal with this, and to get that machinery there at the present cost of transit, which amounts for machinery to about £10 per ton. If a proposition is opened up—and the people themselves are quite willing to find the money to develop it if they can do so under reasonable conditions—and they paid £500 for machinery landed at Coolgardie, it would cost them another £500 to get it the additional 100 miles; so that it must strike members of this Assembly that, unless there is railway communication, it must be a great handicap on the efforts of those people to develop the resources of their own district. Not only are they willing to themselves develop their own resources, but they find, now that there is mention of the railway, that they will be able to obtain assistance from outside. There is plenty of capital ready to be invested in the Norseman district, if the disadvantages that I have mentioned can be overcome in a reasonable manner; and I submit the only possible way, or the

greatest boon that can be given to the district, is the assistance in the shape of a railway. The Lady Miller mine has already been sold and there will be, as soon as possible, erected on that mine some £20,000 to £30,000 worth of machinery. If that be set in order it will employ from 150 to 200 men almost immediately. The mine is at present being worked by just a few men, at a profit, a bare profit, just enough to pay expenses and office expenses over. A mine is regarded as a profitable concern if it pays its way. The Mararoa mine has also been sold, or practically sold; it is under option; there has been £1,000 paid for the option, and about £4,000 has been spent in development. It is one of the propositions mentioned in the report of the State Mining Engineer, which Mr. Montgomery holds out as lasting propositions. He said "It will last for years and employ a large number of men." Those who have had the option have done genuine work on the mine and have thoroughly prospected it. Under the terms on which they hold the option they had to pay over £1,000 and allow the four men who had been working the mine previously, who really would not sell because they had the work of a lifetime before them and did not want to part with it, to continue working at the depth where they were working, 80 feet. The people holding the option have opened up the proposition at a depth of nearly 300 feet, and have found it to be quite as good and as promising at that depth as where the original owners had been working for six or seven years, and making money. This is the position of affairs. The railway was justified in 1900, as is evidenced by the vote passed in this House. It is at present even more justified than it was at that time. The personal disadvantages to the people arise in connection with the remarks made by the member for Yilgarn. He spoke of the possible traffic. We have special excursion fares from the goldfields to Perth and Albany at comparatively low rates. The sum of £2 will buy a return ticket from Kalgoorlie to the coast, but the people from Norseman have to pay £5 for the first 100 miles of the trip to the coast before they can get the advantage of the £2, and they have to spend upon the journey to Coolgardie

another £2 in living expenses owing to the two days it takes them to get from the field to Coolgardie; so that the women and children of the place are under a disadvantage in regard to health, because they are not able to obtain what is obtainable in most other parts of the State, a cheap trip to the seaside. The cost of living at Norseman is necessarily high on account of the high charges for cartage; but the people there, in spite of other disadvantages, are also deprived of many of the luxuries to be obtained in other parts of Western Australia. For instance, at the present time perishable goods have to be carried to Norseman by coach, because it would not do to allow perishable goods to be on the road some seven or eight days, and the freight for fruit upon the coach at the present time is 3s. 3d. per stone. That is an exceedingly high charge; and then it is exposed to the weather for two days, so that by the time the waste is allowed for, the people at Norseman have to pay three times as much for fruit as is paid in Perth. These are only small issues members will say. I think a larger one, and one that should appeal to members representing agricultural districts, is that the more goldfields opened up and the closer communication established between the agricultural districts and the goldfields districts, the better it is for the agriculturists, inasmuch as at the present time the best market for the agriculturists is to be obtained on the goldfields. The more goldfields opened up and the more population the agriculturists of Western Australia have to serve, the better it is for them. Seeing that the Government are pledged to the policy of extending agricultural railways, because they are already building them, and to inducing people to go on the land, surely members will realise that the development of a field such as Norseman will increase the markets for the agriculturists and improve their position in Western Australia. The railway has already been surveyed; it has been promised for years, and I am very pleased to find this afternoon no one in the Chamber having anything to say in opposition to it. So it would be wearisome for me to farther enlarge on the advantages of the railway. I can only appeal to those members who have opposed the railway before, some of whom reside

in other parts of the State and do not know for themselves the locality, to have an open mind in regard to this proposition. Even though it may not please them personally, and even though it may not work for their constituents any great advantage, I hope they will be generous, and that they will also be just. I think if they approach this proposition with that spirit they will realise that every inquiry made has justified the construction of the railway, and that as the people of Norseman have been promised it and are waiting for it, it is only a fair proposition and only reasonable to expect that the Bill will pass its second reading without any further opposition.

MR. J. C. G. FOULKES (Claremont): Reference has been made repeatedly in this debate to the fact that this railway has been promised for a great many years. We have been informed by the member for Dundas that it was promised so far back as ten years ago, and that when Sir John Forrest was in power he introduced a Bill for the construction of the railway. It has been promised by subsequent Premiers; when Mr. Walter James was Premier, I believe he introduced a Bill for the construction of this railway; but there is one curious fact that has arisen in regard to the various proposals made by many Governments for the construction of this railway, and that is that every one of those Premiers, and every one of those Governments, abandoned the proposal.

MR. BATH: The proposal was not abandoned by the Labour Government.

MR. FOULKES: The Labour Government probably were not long enough in office to carry out the proposal: I may be excused for forgetting that fact. At any rate the position is, that all these various Governments promised the construction of the railway.

MR. WARE: Was it the railway to Norseman or the railway to Esperance?

MR. FOULKES: The railway to Norseman. While these various Governments were proposing to construct this railway to Norseman, there was side by side a persistent agitation going on for the construction of the railway to Esperance; and it has all along showed to me that the people, more particularly those on the goldfields, who were in favour of

constructing a railway to Norseman were persistent in their agitation for the construction of a railway to Esperance.

MR. HORAN: That was during the pre-federation days.

MR. FOULKES: It has been the position up till now. We have had many members on both sides of the House warm supporters of the construction of the railway to Esperance. I remember very well the fact that the present Minister for Mines (Hon. H. Gregory) has regularly and persistently supported and voted for the construction of a railway to Esperance, and that though his leader, Mr. Walter James, had introduced a Bill for and had announced the fact that he was a supporter of a railway to Norseman, yet it did not prevent his colleague the Minister for Mines regularly and persistently voting for the construction of a railway to Esperance.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Who voted for a railway to Esperance?

MR. FOULKES: You did. I am well aware also of the fact that there are other members in the present Ministry who were strong agitators for the construction of a railway to Esperance. I believe the Attorney General has been a member for many years of a league started on the goldfields, called the Esperance Railway League.

MR. HOLMAN: He was president of the league.

MR. FOULKES: I did not know that. I have my information on what I think is good authority. I am quite willing that the Attorney General should correct me on the point. I would be pleased to receive an announcement from him that he has abandoned all ideas in regard to the construction of a railway to Esperance. Another member of the present Ministry, the Treasurer, some years ago announced that he was in favour of the construction of a railway to Esperance, but I believe some years afterwards he announced that he was not so keen or so strong in his arguments for the construction of that railway. I mention these facts for the purpose of reminding the House that if this railway is made to Norseman we shall still have that persistent agitation—and I believe it will increase—for the continuation of the railway to Esperance.

MR. COLLIER: That would be a good thing.

MR. HEITMANN: Hear, hear.

MR. FOULKES: It is right that the House should be reminded of these facts. It means that if the line is continued to Esperance it will be a serious thing for the people of this State.

MR. WALKER: Why?

MR. FOULKES: I am speaking more particularly of the people who live in the coastal districts. It will also be a serious thing for the goldfields because, we have now one railway to the goldfields, and we cannot afford, judging by the railway finances, to construct another railway which will compete with the railway already in existence.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Would the Norseman Railway compete?

MR. FOULKES: The railway to Esperance would.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is the question of the railway to Norseman that is before the House.

MR. FOULKES: I am merely warning the House that it may be only a short time—I do not say this Government will introduce it; I feel certain they would not do so.

MR. HUDSON: Would you be unjust to Norseman to save yourself?

MR. FOULKES: I do not wish to be unjust to Norseman. What I am anxious to do is to remind the House of the agitation we have heard for many years for the construction of a railway to Esperance.

MR. HORAN: The agitation is now dead.

MR. FOULKES: There are many members in the House who are in favour of the construction of the railway to Esperance, and I feel quite sure of the fact that if the line is constructed to Norseman that agitation will grow, and will be as persistent in the future as it has been in the past. I view with great apprehension the construction of this railway to Norseman. I admit that it has been a fair goldfield; but it has not been always so good. Some members wish us to believe that the prospects of this goldfield are particularly good; but I know this, having looked at the market quotations, that Norseman mines for many years past have not been quoted at

a very high price, and perhaps in twelve months time they may be lower.

MR. HEITMANN: That is no criterion.

MR. HUDSON: What were they quoted at?

MR. FOULKES: I cannot remember just now; but I know it to be perfectly correct that this goldfield has fluctuated during the past ten years.

MR. HUDSON: The Great Fingal does that.

MR. FOULKES: I considered it my duty to point out the great danger we run in regard to the construction of this railway, and I only wish to repeat once more that the agitation for the Esperance line will be as strong as ever.

MR. T. WALKER (Kanowna): The last speaker seems to think that Esperance belongs to another State and that it is our duty to treat it as a foreign section of some country close by, hostile to Fremantle in particular. The proposal before the Chamber is not to take a railway to Esperance, but simply to construct a line in the direction of Norseman, to reach that field. That is all that is proposed now. What future legislators may do is scarcely at the present moment a concern of ours. When the time is ripe—and I am sure it ultimately will be—for taking a line to Esperance, in all possibility Fremantle will then have its dock and there will be no necessity to be afraid of any rivalry either in the way of a port or a railway against existing ports and interests. The country will have become so developed that both ports and both railways will be of service to the citizens. I for one cannot understand what prevents people seeing that what tends to develop one section of the State tends to the development of the whole of the State. Any benefit which results from the carrying out of a railway in the direction of Esperance to Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie is a benefit to every portion of the State. That is not the policy which has been pursued in other parts of the world. What would have been said in New Zealand if Wellington had said that there should be no port at Auckland, or no port at Dunedin (Port Chalmers), or Lyttleton? What would have been said if it had been argued that there should be no railway lines taken from any of those ports into the interior? How is it

they are so flourishing? Only because there has been no jealousy as between port and port, and on the part of the legislators especially there has been a desire to see every possible port opened. And to the traveller in that part of the world it is astonishing what a little distance one can go before one comes upon a port or harbour of some kind where trade is carried on. Lines of steamships run round the two islands, calling at all ports on the eastern side and on the western side, and on the channel between the two islands, and all round the South Island in the same way, making a tour of all and doing trade at all, and the whole of New Zealand has received benefits from this extensive opening of every harbour that nature has given to the country. Lines have been built into the interior from them, so that they have to a very large extent solved the problem of decentralisation; and instead of focussing the whole of the prosperity of the country in one spot they have distributed it all over the land, and therefore they have given to the country not only greater present prosperity but larger future possibilities. And that is really what we want in this State. Therefore I cannot for a moment understand that narrow selfishness which, because we have a port at Fremantle, would close every other port upon our coast lest there might be some competition, some interference with vested interests that are already established in the State. It is not those particularly who have vested interests in and around Perth or around Fremantle that we have to consider. We have to consider the whole population of this State, and our legislation should be aimed at their advantage. Whatever we do, whatever lines we construct, wherever we propose to open up country, we may interfere with somebody's vested interest; but we shall effect, I hope, by this policy of progress, benefits to large numbers, and it is the large numbers we have to consider. Now it cannot be denied, even by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, that Norseman is a promising mining centre. He has told us of course that there have been periods of fluctuation there. What gold-mining centre or mining centre of any kind has not been subject to periodical ups and downs? Why, even Kalgoorlie itself has

had considerable fluctuation. And Coolgardie, from which this line starts, what a history it has had of ups and downs in this respect! And yet it was from this point, Coolgardie, that our first line started out, that the water track has started. And yet we see how they have surpassed the lines of development beyond the point at which it was intended to stop when these great works were undertaken. And we will see when this line is taken to Norseman that possibly Norseman will be only a part of the mineral belt that will be served by this railway that we are undertaking to build to-day; for we cannot suppose that the minerals will terminate with the terminus of this proposed railway. We know that between Norseman and Coolgardie, within a very short period indeed, mineral deposits have been tapped that showed promising results, results that have warranted the investment of capital on a large scale, that have induced our Ministers, who are more interested in companies than they are in prospectors, into giving them special favours. We know that has happened between Coolgardie and Norseman; so it may be in the immediate neighbourhood of Norseman and just beyond in a little time from now. At all events, this gold-field has been struggling. The Government have had to construct roads to it and have to keep those roads in travelling condition. It has cost the State a fine penny to have those roads constructed and maintained. And I want to know what greater danger there is in a railway than in roads, more especially when a railway to the spot will cost very little more to maintain than the roads cost to maintain, will employ more people upon it than the road employs, and will cost perhaps as little in construction as it would have cost originally to construct the road. It is not anything like in fair proportion. We have the road, we have buses, and we only want to keep in advance with this portion of the State as we do with every other portion. We want to supplant Cobb's coaches with better means of travelling in this part of the State as we want to supplant the wagon, the foot, and the camel in other parts—it is only in consonance with the progress of this State, especially when shown it can be done so cheaply. The original difficulty with the construction of

the Norseman line was its expense, because it has hitherto been held to be impossible to construct railway lines unless we did it on the expensive scale exhibited in the construction of our main lines. That, of course, would frighten any Treasurer. But now that we can do it cheaply, what is there to fear? That narrow selfishness, that fear of troubling some vested interest at Fremantle, that should not concern us at all.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not the fear.

MR. WALKER: Then I would like the hon. member to tell us what the fear really is.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We should send our goldfields trade to South Australia.

MR. WALKER: The hon. member now touches upon a very large question, and a more or less debatable question. He points out that Esperance, being in closer proximity to Adelaide than is Fremantle, therefore Adelaide being nearer to Kalgoorlie and the north-east goldfields *via* Esperance than it is *via* Fremantle, it will give Adelaide a still further advantage. That is to say, the products of South Australia can be carried cheaper by way of Esperance to the fields, and that State will be a more formidable competitor to us than if those goods had to be taken by way of Fremantle. But is that the way to stop it? What should be done? If this is the problem ahead of us, if we are only afraid of Adelaide in competition with our own producers, then the policy is to insist by hook or crook upon getting hold of the Customs of this State for this State.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Which you will never get.

MR. WALKER: And so regulate the entry of farm produce that we may give a chance to our own people.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is an impossibility.

MR. WALKER: It is no more an impossibility than any other political problem: it only means backbone, it only means a little wisdom.

MEMBER: It is only a matter of right.

MR. WALKER: Right means wisdom at all times. But I am not advocating that just now; that is rather off my track. But even supposing it were put at the worst, Esperance is the natural port of the goldfields, and what right

has Fremantle to say "You shall not have your natural port"? It is their right to have a port as Northam has, and is it for us to say that they shall not have a right of access to the sea by easy method as every other portion of the State has? If we are going on that ground, why not, as has been suggested, shut up Geraldton and every other port on our coast right up to the North? Why allow a single harbour up North? For somebody with goods may sneak in there. What is the good of the Pilbarra line? That will give Adelaide an advantage over our own producers; it will then cost less to send goods there from Adelaide than it will cost the Northern farmer to send his goods down by our railway line and by sea.

HON. F. H. PRIESSE: They will stop that.

MR. WALKER: Then why not stop it in the case of Esperance? We can do it in some form or another; and if necessary we can go to the home authorities. But that is not the question now. It is only a question of natural justice which I would use if we were advocating the Esperance Railway now, to get to the north-east goldfields, to Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Kanowna, and the rest right away to Leonora, and to give to these an outlet to the sea by the nearest route as is given to those in close proximity to the coast, as in the case of Bunbury or in the case of our port at Fremantle. We have no right to stand in the way in this respect; but the purpose now is only to take a line to Norseman, and surely there is more justice in that than there is in taking a line to Kojonup, twisting around to suit—at all events, it looks like it—political purposes, serving even some members of this House to an extraordinary degree. It is just as rational and feasible, just as honourable and necessary, to take that line to Norseman as it is to take a line to Kojonup. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: More so.] I am putting the matter now only in the mildest possible form, seeing that if these men can have their dog's hind-leg of railways through their pastoral fields, so should the miners have a means of approaching the main lines of our State. That is the purpose, and to allow some parochial feelings and

fears that will not be realised, mere dreams, to prevent one's doing justice to a goldfield which has been promised assistance year after year, by Ministry after Ministry, is absolutely iniquitous and unjust.

MR. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle): I have but a few words to say. If I were allowed to take the expressions of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) as voicing the opinion of the powers that be, or of the powers that are to be, I should have the greatest possible pleasure in voting against this line; but, as I am unable to credit the hon. member with giving to this question the same amount of study which he has bestowed on others, I hold he does not quite grasp the question. I shall not oppose the line, notwithstanding that the hon. member has raised some rather serious questions, questions which have not been previously raised in the debate. He referred to Esperance as a rival port of Fremantle. To my mind, that does not apply. The argument which has been used against the Esperance Railway is the competition with an already existing line. Esperance is not necessarily a rival to our chief port, but the argument is that if you can convey on your present railway from one seaport to a centre, and if there is not too much profit in the traffic, it is surely not profitable to construct another railway from another port to serve that same centre, without a necessarily ensuing increase of returns. My objection is that no justification exists for building another line to the goldfield and creating another port. Moreover, in this case there cannot be a port without the additional expenditure of a large sum of money in harbour improvements—in fact, another Fremantle. My idea is that the question of rival ports should hardly enter at all into the consideration. I have not heard before that Fremantle being the first port, and the port from which most if not all of the goods imported into Western Australia enter for transport direct to the fields, the question of ports should apply. I have gone through the summary of information supplied to-day, and from a glance at the document I am satisfied that this railway can never be even the first section of an Esperance railway. If I were sure, or if I had even a suspicion,

of what I thought when I first entered the House, I should oppose the railway. The suspicion I then had was that this was to be the first section of an Esperance railway, and because I believe in keeping my word to my electors—

MR. HEITMANN: Parish pump!

MR. BOLTON: Notwithstanding that the member for Cue makes nothing of his pledges, because of that promise to my electors.—

MR. HEITMANN: There is no parish pump at Cue.

MR. BOLTON: If I were suspicious that this railway might become the first section of a railway to Esperance, then, notwithstanding that the proposal to construct it comes from a quarter represented on this side of the House, I should oppose it. However, because I have looked at the information supplied by the Government, I am satisfied that this cannot be the first section of a railway to Esperance. For instance, take the weight of the rails, 45lbs. It may be urged that the present Eastern Goldfields Railway was laid with 45lb. rails for some considerable time; but it was found necessary to improve that line considerably before any running speed could be attained. Again, the ruling grade, 1 in 40, would be rather a serious handicap for an Esperance railway supplying the goldfields with traffic from oversea. Farther, there is the 6ft. 6in. sleeper; and yet we find that in our constructed railways the sleeper 8ft. long and 4½in. thick is being replaced by a much heavier hewn sleeper. So that if the Government had the least idea of making this the first section of an Esperance railway, it is clear they would not put down half-round sleepers 6ft. 6in. in length. I am satisfied, therefore, that this is a railway which cannot carry the Eastern traffic, which cannot supply the goldfields with the quantity of imported produce now sent over the Eastern Goldfields Railway from and through Fremantle. On a line such as this proposed, it would not be possible to exceed a speed of 20 miles an hour; and that maximum speed would work out, over a distance of 107 miles, to an average of no more than 15 miles an hour. Even if such a line as this were continued to Esperance, it would be impossible to convey over it the goods necessary to the goldfields. In

fact, I know that this line would have to be pulled up and rebuilt, regraded, and constructed of heavier rails, before the goldfields could be supplied over such a line. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Katauning): It is not my intention to detain the House long on this matter. I wish merely to put myself right in regard to the question of this railway. Those who have referred to the previous debate on this question, some years ago, will have found that I strongly supported the construction of the line. Indeed I took such interest in the matter as to work up support for the railway. The Assembly approved of the construction, but the project was lost in the Legislative Council by one vote. Subsequently it was revived in 1900, and I opposed the building of the line at that time for the reason that the House had not been supplied with certain information which I thought ought to be forthcoming. However, I am now satisfied that with the prospects before the people of Norseman the line is justifiable. Certainly it is a line which ought to have been built at the time I first advocated it. Had it been built then, we should have seen a much greater development in that part of the country, because development cannot take place at such a rapid rate without the advantages afforded by a railway. In the Norseman district are many of what are termed low-grade mines, which, if cheaper freights had been afforded, would undoubtedly have developed to the advantage of those interested in them, and at the same time to the benefit of the country. I was greatly surprised by the remarks of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker), who went somewhat out of his way to make comparisons between what may be termed agricultural lines and the building of mineral lines. As to the farther comparison with New Zealand railways, I wish to point out that the two sets of conditions are not at all analogous. The conditions of New Zealand are widely dissimilar from those existing at Esperance, which moreover are broadly different from those existing in agricultural districts of this part of the State. There is no probability of any great agricultural development in the Esperance

district. Certainly the land is good once Esperance is passed, but the conditions of farming are not so favourable as those of the districts traversed by the Eastern and Great Southern Railways. I therefore see no prospect of marked agricultural development, and I think consequently there is not likely to be so large a population located in that part of the country as is likely to be the case in connection with the other lines which have been mentioned. At the time the question of an ultimate connection of the Norseman line with Esperance, or of the construction of a railway from Esperance to the fields, was first mooted, a good deal of uneasiness was caused in the country; because agricultural people were then beginning to take up residence on our land and to develop the country, and it was considered probable that the advantages which would have been granted to Esperance by the construction of the line, bringing it much nearer to the port of Adelaide, might prove detrimental to the growing interests of Western Australia. Hence, disquiet and opposition in certain parts of the State. However, to-day we stand in a much better position. We have developed our land very materially, and I do not fear the construction of the line from that aspect to-day so much as I did. At the same time, I do feel that all we can take into consideration now is the construction of a railway from Coolgardie to Norseman for the opening up of new industries in that locality. The question of its extension is one which, I take it, will not come up for many years; and when it does arise we in the settled parts of the country shall be in a much better position to compete with the Eastern States. We are to-day in a most favourable position even as regards Fremantle, but with the advantages we hope to obtain in the form of lower railway freights for the carriage of our products we shall be able to compete successfully with the Eastern exporter. We are bound, under conditions now ruling, to come into close contact with him as regards products which Eastern Australia is able to send here. This shows, as I just said, that we are now able to compete more successfully with the products of the Eastern States. I mention this merely to show that the position described by the member

for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) does not apply. It is, of course, right for the people of this part of the State to protect their interests and the interests of the people on the land, as was done in the early days. I am satisfied that the building of the line will be highly advantageous to the country in the immediate neighbourhood of Norseman, and also to the surrounding districts. It will mean the opening of country to the greater benefit of the producers of our State by reason of the trade which will flow to these parts—the parts lying near the coast, and especially Perth and the surrounding district. We shall have a much larger market than at present exists; and I think the member for Kanowna, being a strong protectionist and desirous that our people should benefit by the supplying of this State's requirements, will agree with me in this. The construction of the line must prove a benefit to the State generally, and is bound to help in the building up of a large community to the advantage of Western Australia as a whole. I am indeed glad to find this proposal brought forward, for the Norseman people have been patient for many years. The low-grade propositions to which I have referred cannot be worked to advantage in the absence of a railway, and I fully expect that the line proposed, when built, will add materially to the wealth of the people in and about Norseman, and, I may repeat, prove of benefit to the entire State. I should however like the Government to take into consideration that we must not build these railways, especially a railway such as this, on what are termed the cheapest methods of construction—at all events, the methods must not be so cheap as to hinder the economical working of the line, difficult or impossible. I wish the matter to be regarded from this standpoint, because there is bound to be a greater desire to spend money in the strengthening of a railway such as this than would perhaps be the case in connection with some agricultural lines, traversing districts where timber is plentiful, and where one can strengthen both to greater advantage and at less cost than in the case of railways running through districts bare of timber. This aspect of the matter deserves attention.

THE PREMIER: The Norseman rainfall is very slight, and therefore the maintenance will not be nearly so heavy as in agricultural districts.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Although I am not in favour of constructing these railways regardless of principles of economy, yet I should be sorry to see the pendulum swing too much the other way; since the cost of maintenance will be rendered so much heavier, and the loss to the State in this respect is not compensated by low initial cost of construction. I mention this because those who are taking the matter in hand desire that we should regard the proposal in all its bearings. For this reason I have thrown out certain suggestions for the consideration of the Government. I am glad to see this railway placed on the proposals of the Ministry, and I hope the verdict of the House will be favourable towards its construction.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. N. Keenan): I desire to occupy only a very short time in supporting the Bill before the House, and I would not have risen were it not for the fact that I think it is necessary to emphasise that the present proposal deals only with the construction of a railway between Coolgardie and Norseman. We are told by the member for Claremont that this proposal is to be viewed in a hostile way because of the bogey which he constructs in his own mind of a railway to Esperance. It is most important that the people of Norseman should have their claim listened to and justice dealt to them without being prejudiced by any bogey of this character. The question of the construction of the Esperance line when it does come up for discussion will, I am sure, be met with opposition, and on the other hand will be supported by arguments of a different kind from those that were advanced in respect to this proposal to-night.

MR. ANGWIN: This will be a good argument, though, in favour of it; a short distance.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the hon. member had listened to the excellent advice given by the member for North Fremantle, who has had some experience of railways and railway working, he would have learnt that the present pro-

posal would be of no use at all for a trunk line.

MR. ANGWIN: We know that a good deal of regrounding has been done.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The only other argument against the construction of the line was also advanced by the member for Claremont, who urged that this proposal to construct a line from Coolgardie to Norseman was brought forward by successive Governments which had promised to carry it into effect, but each of which had abandoned it. If that is an argument at all, it is a strong argument for carrying it into effect to-day. Something promised by successive Governments must have considerable merits, and the fact that the Governments did not keep their promises is a strong argument for retrieving the wrong done to that locality.

MR. FOULKES: Although the various Governments promised to construct the railway and abandoned the idea, the agitation still went on for the construction of a line to Esperance.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think that what the hon. member wished to point out was that there was no special advantage except to miners and those interested in mining about Norseman and between Norseman and Coolgardie, and therefore there was nothing to congratulate himself upon and nothing for him to support. I venture to hope that the House will look at the proposal not from such a narrow point of view, but from a generous, or if not a generous a just, point of view. Even if they are somewhat selfish let them ask themselves this: what does the prosperity of Perth and Fremantle depend upon? Does it depend upon the fact that in the immediate surroundings there are suburbs which have been built in a great hurry and perhaps are to-day somewhat overbuilt? Does it not depend upon the development of the back country? And when Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie are prosperous and the Norseman field becomes prosperous the result will be felt in Fremantle and Perth, and the properties owned by those gentlemen who look only to their own doorsteps and never beyond will be enhanced in value. Therefore, if they judge it from that selfish point of view the proposition should commend itself to them inasmuch as it

will lead to their own advantage. However, I do not desire to cover the ground which has been so ably covered by the Premier, the member for Coolgardie, and the member for Dundas, all of whom have gone into the merits of this question, and none of whose statements have been challenged or met. I would simply say it is not necessary in this discussion for members to concern themselves with the question of a line to Esperance. That would be bringing in an issue which, possibly, might be misunderstood, and which is entirely foreign. [Interjection by Mr. FOULKES.] We find a community struggling for 10 or 12 years against the greatest possible disadvantage, and which in spite of that has continued to maintain a certain degree of prosperity, to maintain a centre of industry in one of the back portions of the State. They have asked again and again—and have been promised again and again—communication with the more central portion of the State to develop their country and the immediate possibilities of their country in a manner that should add more to the prosperity of the State; and at last the wish has come. It is no very great thing we are asking members to consummate to-day, but it is surely an act of long-delayed justice. We shall hear possibly one or two dissentient voices in the whole of the House against this Bill, and I hope there will be only one or two, because I recognise that in another place we have to depend largely on the unanimity of this House to obtain sanction for this project. I have no doubt that the House will be practically unanimous, and that although there may be one or two dissentients they will be only found amongst those who, as I have already remarked, are distinguished by no other quality than a selfish view which they take of any proposal which comes before them.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): In supporting this railway, I merely desire to make a few remarks, because I think it is unnecessary that a supporter of the railway should go over ground which has been traversed by the Premier and the member for Dundas.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: And the member for Coolgardie.

MR. BATH: On my appearance in Parliament I think I made my first speech in this House in support of railway communication being granted to the Norseman field, and the whole of the development of that goldfield has continued to justify the view I then expressed. I agree with the Attorney General that it is not a question of whether members in this House have or have not advocated a railway to Esperance. I myself have taken up the attitude of advocating the goldfields being linked up to what by nature has been designed as their natural port; but the question before the House at the present time is whether the development of Norseman does or does not justify railway communication being extended to it.

MR. BOLTON: It spreads farther than that.

MR. BATH: It would be the very extremity of manifest injustice if members were to say that the Norseman people and people resident in that district, struggling as they have been for a large number of years against very great difficulties, should be denied what they have been asking for because of their geographical position. If later on there were an opinion in this Assembly in conjunction with a majority of members in another place in favour of the extension of the railway to Esperance, members of this House who may be opposed to that project would have to acquiesce with the wishes of the majority, just as members on this side throughout the session have had to acquiesce in decisions which have been obnoxious to us but have been carried by the majority of the House. The member for Claremont forgets the fact that fortunately or unfortunately, I do not know which, he happens to be a member of a majority, and as a member of the Ministerial party he has been able to assist the Government in carrying proposals against the wishes of members sitting on this side. And if on some future occasion a proposal, whether it be a railway proposal or a legislative proposal, happens to be carried against his views and he is in a minority, he will have to bow to the decision of the majority, just as members on this side have to bow to-day. The whole question which presses for solu-

tion before this House is whether Norseman deserves railway communication or not, and it is upon that point that the decision of this House should be given, that is for justice to be done. So far as the Norseman field is concerned, I have not a personal acquaintance with it; but interested as I am in the development of our goldfields, I have watched the progress that field has made, and it seems to me that the cause for the railway is apparent in the fact that this field, which has struggled into prominence, has contributed a very large proportion or a considerable amount to the gold yield of this State, and is suffering from the disabilities under which it labours at the present time. And if we are guided by the experience of other fields that have been granted communication, we must see—even those who oppose the proposal—that the extension of railway communication must give a fillip and an impetus to the industry which will place it in a still more prominent position. We have only to take the mineral fields of Australia, Broken Hill for instance—see what it has meant to South Australia, which naturally has secured the traffic from that field. Take fields like Bendigo and Ballarat. You will find that railways going to those districts are amongst the most profitable of the Victorian system. Take New South Wales, and see what a profitable proposition the railway to Cobar is. Then come to Queensland and take the railways to Charters Towers and Mount Morgan, and you will find that they are amongst the most profitable railways working in those States. A fact known to anyone who has made a study of our railway system is that the mineral field is the one above all others the most profitable for traffic. And what makes it profitable is this: in regard to other industries you have to depend upon a congestion of traffic at a certain time of the year, whilst at other portions of the year the railway is comparatively idle, whereas in relation to mining there is traffic all the time. There is a big population to be catered for; there is the constant carriage of machinery to be utilised in the development of new properties; and there is a scene of activity throughout the whole of the year in connection with these railway propositions.

MR. FOULKES: So long as the mineral field lasts.

MR. BATH: If you take the pastoral or farming district you will find the traffic is concentrated in one period of the year. The hon. member says "as long as the field lasts." I have heard a great deal in this Assembly from members as to the want of permanency in the mining industry. We all recognise the fact that the depreciation of our gold resources means very much less revenue for that railway, but we must also recognise in regard to development in mining that the increase of invention and the discovery of new scientific methods have opened up areas of payable ore which in previous days could not have been profitably worked. Although the mines come to an end, I would challenge the hon. member to point to any mining field in the Eastern States which has been granted railway communication, and which has not maintained its prosperity and continued in existence as a source of revenue profitable to the Railway Department for a great many years. So far as the Norseman Railway is concerned we can rely upon this, that whilst some of the mines may become worked out and some may have to be abandoned, others will spring up which will continue to make that field a profitable one for many years to come, one which will amply justify the extension of the railway system to that town. One has only to look at the return of our railways to find that since the Eastern Goldfields line was first opened, year by year the amount earned over and above working expenses of that line has consistently increased even in spite of the fact that the Eastern Railway includes the extension to Menzies, Kanowna, and other places linked up to the system prior to the discontinuance of the issue of sectional returns. Some remarks have been made in connection with the report of the advisory board, notably by the member for Yilgarn, and I think it is only right to say that those gentlemen who constituted that advisory board made a very fair and business-like report. They were sent there not to indulge in prophecy as to the future, or to indulge in any estimate which after all could not be regarded as absolutely reliable as to the prospects of the future traffic on the railway system. They were there

to deal with the railway proposition as it was, and I think we owe a debt to the advisory board for the way in which they carried out their work, for the minute investigation which they made. And I say it is a tribute to the proposals advocated by the then Premier that all those railway projects were reported on by the impartial advisory board, who did their duty in so workmanlike a fashion. It is for politicians to indulge in hopes for the future, in roseate views of what the district, whether mining or agricultural, will ultimately produce; but if we are to appoint an independent board, we must let the board report on each project as it is, leaving the House which are responsible for the expenditure of the money to indulge in hopes for the future prospects of the scheme. The member for Claremont and others referred to the continual shelving of the Norseman Railway project by successive Ministries. I wish to disabuse members' minds of the notion that the Labour Government ever shelved or had any desire to shelve this proposal.

MR. FOULKES: It was the persistent agitation for the Esperance Railway that was used by various Governments to shelve the Norseman project.

MR. BATH: The hon. member may talk of other Governments, but the Labour Government had no desire to shelve the proposal. The railway was reported on by the advisory board, it was embodied in the railway construction proposals which the Labour Government would have submitted in the financial programme at the end of 1905; but we had not the opportunity of presenting that programme, and we cannot be accused of shelving the proposal, for political developments prevented its introduction. I desire now to congratulate the Premier and his colleagues on their having introduced this Railway Bill, which I believe is only doing justice to a district that has had to struggle against great odds; and I confidently believe that the construction of this light line will be a source of strength, hope, and inspiration to those connected with the Norseman field, and that, consequent on the construction of the line, we may look to a period of great development, great progress, and great prosperity not only at

Norseman but in all other parts of the State.

MR. J. BREBBER (North Perth): Right through I think the House has been looking at this matter from one side. Members have not in my opinion asked themselves what is the real position at present. It appears to me the question is, are we prepared to spend £147,000 of the people's money to build a railway to benefit 1,600 people? Those 1,600 people supply four passengers per week, who travel over the route of the proposed railway.

THE PREMIER: They have supplied 1½ millions of gold.

MR. BREBBER: I will come to the gold by-and-by. I am now dealing with the traffic, represented by four to six passengers a week. Then I believe 40 tons of goods are carried by camel teams and horse teams over the same track. It needs a goldfields member to anticipate the development of this field; and he must use a magnifying glass before he can see any justification whatever for the railway. So far as I can see, the work that is going on and the development of the field show no such justification. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) says he has for years past watched the progress of the field; but the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) says the highest output in the whole history of the field was in 1899, and that ever since the output has been declining. Can we consider the State justified in spending so large a sum of money to support a standstill industry? I could understand the proposal if it referred to Black Range, or any other new field of which the output is growing larger and larger; but here we have a field which for all practical purposes is stagnant. It has made no advancement in its output since 1899; and as the output is used to justify the railway, I do not think we should rush rashly into such a proposal. I say, the only argument which would justify the railway would be a statement that it was only a part of a railway to connect Esperance with the goldfields. Then I should say the project was sound, for the railway cannot pay until it is continued to Esperance. The line cannot be justified unless the traffic from the goldfields

already established from Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie be passed on to Esperance for transshipment. If the Government are prepared to truck goods from the Eastern Goldfields to the Southern coast, and *vice versa*, the argument for this railway is sound. The great test of this railway project is: would any private company or person ever build a railway costing £147,000 to benefit 1,600 people?

MR. HORAN: I have proved that half a-dozen offers of construction were made by private companies.

MR. BREBBER: I do not think any private person would spend that sum for such a purpose.

MR. EDDY: What would North Perth be without a tramline? You would still be in the bush.

MR. BREBBER: North Perth would have gone ahead without a tramline there or in Perth either. The question before us is the Norseman Railway; and for those reasons, unless the Government are making this part of a railway from the Eastern Goldfields to the coast, I cannot see any justification whatever for the Bill.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (West Perth): This question of a railway to Norseman has been agitated for many years. When I first stood for Coolgardie in 1895, the railway from Perth to Coolgardie being then incomplete, I was consulted by a great many Coolgardie people who said it was desired to construct a railway from Coolgardie to Esperance. I told those who consulted me there was no chance whatever of Parliament consenting to such a railway; that if they desired a railway to Norseman, they should agitate for a railway to Norseman alone. But at that time the people would not listen to a proposal for a railway to Norseman; they insisted on a railway all the way to Esperance. It was the fear of this that kept back the Norseman railway for all these years. People felt that building a railway to Esperance meant practically handing over to South Australia the chief traffic of our goldfields. South Australia has not been so very kind to us in the matter of our overland railway proposal; and South Australia has for all its time lived on outside resources. It was almost broken

when Broken Hill was discovered; and that field gave the Colony new life. We have already done much for South Australia; but, as has been pointed out on previous occasions, if we were to build a railway from Esperance to the Eastern Goldfields, we should have two lines of railway feeding the same market. That has been the one bogey, so to speak, a very real bogey, preventing the construction of the railway to Norseman. To-day we have from the Government a proposal for a Norseman Railway; and on the face of it the intention is to go to Norseman and no farther. If I had the slightest suspicion that the railway was part of a scheme for a line to Esperance which would result in handing over the goldfields market to South Australia, I should strenuously oppose the Bill. But I take it the Government intend to link the Norseman field to our present railway system. I should strongly oppose any line of railway which would compete with our existing system; but a line which is to be a branch, a link between our existing railways and another goldfield, a big auriferous district, presents itself to my mind in a different light. I have noted the points mentioned by the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton)—the lightness of the rails, the shortness of the half-round sleepers—everything indicating that this line is to serve Norseman only; and that being so, I shall support the Bill. I wish, however, to be understood distinctly. Any proposal whatever to extend this railway to Esperance will find in me a strong opponent, for the reasons ably given by Mr. Walter James in a speech the report of which I have just been looking at, but which I shall not delay the House by reading. In this case the proposal simply to increase the length of our present railway system to an important mining centre will have my support, for the reasons given by the member for North Fremantle.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison): As a supporter of the Norseman railway I do not think it necessary to dwell long on the merits of the case. The only discordant notes are sounded by the members for Claremont (Mr. Foulkes) and North Perth (Mr. Brebber). The main point of the former is that as soon

as the line is constructed to Norseman an agitation will be started for its continuance to Esperance. In my opinion that agitation has gone for good. We have not heard a word of it for the last three or four years at the least. I do not think there is any possibility of constructing a railway to Esperance for some considerable time. However, there will be time enough to meet that proposal when it is before the House. A member mentioned South Australia. I hope the South Australian people do not yet govern the people of this State. We are at present quite capable of controlling our own destiny. When we fail to do that, the people of South Australia can interfere. In my opinion the member for Claremont raised this bogey in lieu of an argument. I do not intend to dwell on the Esperance Railway, for I do not think it is now under consideration. The member for North Perth makes light of the number of passengers travelling between Coolgardie and Norseman. He says there are four per week; but I can assure him he is a long way out in his estimate. Had he been on that track only a few months ago, or were he to go on it now, he would meet scores of travellers to and from Coolgardie every day in the week. I have visited Norseman some three or four times, and speaking as a representative of the goldfields, I say one of the first goldfields railways in this State should be the railway to Norseman; I will give it all the support I possibly can. In connection with the goods traffic to Norseman, the member for North Perth, if he had tramped out on that track, would have seen the amount of goods going down there. In fact, the question of Norseman itself is not, in my opinion, the only one we should take fully into consideration; because we have several other centres, and very promising ones too, to be served by this railway. The member for North Perth considered that if Norseman was a new and rising centre and needed pushing forward, he would support it; but let me remind him that only lately, during the past year, one of the best discoveries in the State was made at Higginsville. It is one of the most promising fields in Western Australia, and it will be a great factor in preventing the decrease in the output of

gold. The Premier said that there were 150 to 200 men at Higginsville, but I think that when I was there there was double that number. I have been right through the place; and knowing a little about mining, I consider that the line of reef at Higginsville is one of the longest and most continuous in the State. I am sure it will be permanent. They have gone to a certain depth, and the reef lives as far as they have gone down. There is a network of reefs through the country; and when we consider that this country has not been touched for nine or ten years, though thousands of people have travelled both ways through the belt, and that it remained undiscovered until last year, we can believe that as soon as the railway is there and the people have an opportunity of looking round, there will be other finds equally as great as Higginsville. I urge on the city members to consider the decline in the gold yield. It is decreasing by 100,000oz. each year. We will have a reduction this year of 150,000oz., or £600,000 worth less than last year's output; and the reduction last year on the previous year's figures was 100,000oz. In the last two years the reduction has been £1,000,000 worth of gold, and we must consider the best means of stopping any farther reduction. In my opinion, one of the best ways to do so is to open up goldfields districts by giving railway communication, so that they may get their mining timber and fuel at a much cheaper rate than at present, and so that the people in those districts may have some of the benefits of civilisation they cannot procure until they have railway communication with the various centres. It is needless for me to speak at any length in support of a railway to Norseman, because I have supported the measure ever since I have been in this Assembly, that is for the last five years, and I could add no more to what I said in 1893, when I spoke in support of the motion moved by Mr. Thomas for the construction of the line. I have already said that in my opinion there are more than double the number of men the Premier mentioned as being at Higginsville, but also there has been a remarkable increase in the number of men on shows at Princess Royal and Norseman. The Cumberland, the Mararoa, the Lady Maud, and

several others are very promising. A few years ago when the report was made by the inquiry board, the bulk of the men were employed on the Princess Royal, but at present there are 120 to 130 men less employed on that mine than when the report was made, probably all those men being now engaged in opening up other properties in and around Norseman and Princess Royal. I hope the Government, if they have not already done so, will reserve an area of 15 to 20 miles on each side of the railway for firewood purposes. I believe they have made a reserve on one side, but I believe it is on the side embracing Lake Cowan, where, for the most part, the timber is not very thick about the arms of the lake. I hope if they have not done so already, they will take into consideration this matter of reserving an area on each side of the line.

MR. ANGIN: Where does the Kalgoolie-Boulder Firewood Company cut?

MR. HOLMAN: The line running out from Boulder goes in a different direction.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Why do you want a reserve?

MR. HOLMAN: So that the timber companies will not get it as they have done in other parts of the goldfields. We should reserve an area so that the small man can go on it and cut. We should let the workers participate in the profits, instead of giving the whole area to one big company, as we have done in the past. We should give every facility to the small men to get firewood carried over the line, instead of having the trouble we have had in the past in connection with privately-owned lines. I totally disagree with one remark of the Premier's. He said that the arbitration award at Norseman is the highest in the State. It is far from being the highest.

THE PREMIER: I corrected that.

MR. HOLMAN: Yes; but the wages paid at Norseman now are not nearly high enough for the privations the workers have to undergo there. I am opposed to the State constructing lines for the purpose of restricting wages. I do not know whether the Premier intended to hint that when the railway was constructed there would be an opportunity of reducing wages. If so, I totally oppose that principle. The workers have battled in that

district for a considerable time, and if any benefit is to be had from the construction of the line, they are just as much entitled to it as the companies. I say from personal knowledge that the lot of the workers in that part of the State is not an enviable one. They should receive every consideration; because we must look at in this way, that even if the companies leave that part, the working miners there will have to bear the burden of the railway, and they should receive consideration instead of all the consideration being given to the companies. If we build railways they should be for the benefit of the people of the State as a whole, and not for the companies who take no interest in the State beyond drawing big dividends.

THE PREMIER: Nearly all those mines down at Norseman are owned by local people.

MR. HOLMAN: A good many of them; and you will notice that the mines owned and worked by local people, to which the business people contribute, always pay higher wages than the foreign companies. The same system obtains throughout the State. The Premier remarked that if an accident occurred to machinery, considerable delay and expense had to be undergone before the necessary machinery could be secured to carry on the work. That obtains in other parts of the State, and although I do not intend to say one word to oppose the Norseman Railway, because had an opportunity been given me I should certainly, as I have said before in this House, have cast my vote in favour of the Norseman Railway being one of the first railways in the State to be constructed, the people in the Peak Hill district are situated exactly as are the people in the Norseman district. The district from Nannine to Peak Hill has turned out considerably more gold than all the centres about Norseman mentioned by the Premier. I am sure the Premier will agree with me that the country between Nannine and Peak Hill deserves some consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: What is the distance from Nannine to Peak Hill?

MR. HOLMAN: The shortest distance between the two places is about 95 miles. I have already brought this matter before the House. The effect of spending £1,000

on the route between Nannine and Peak Hill would be to reduce the length of the journey by 25 miles; but the Government refused to spend that sum of money to enable the traffic to reach Peak Hill by a shorter route, instead of having to go round.

THE PREMIER: What is the object of going round?

MR. HOLMAN: They go round because it is the old beaten track, the first track made. They cannot get any consideration to have it shortened. Application has been made time after time to have that matter remedied. However, I do not wish that matter to retard the progress of any other part of the State, though I consider that when we do justice to one part of the State, we should do it in other directions. The gold yield from North Murchison is considerably more than that from the centres mentioned by the Premier, and the district is entitled to some consideration. The people there labour under greater disabilities than they do in the Norseman district, because in the Norseman district they have an ample supply of mining timber, whereas on the Murchison there is hardly a stick to be got within 60 miles of the main mining camps, and in the near future the whole of the Murchison must be supplied with fuel and mining timber from hundreds of miles away, and it must all be brought by rail. These centres should receive consideration, or we will see the gold yield of the State decreasing far more than it is doing now. I have no desire to delay the passage of this measure by bringing forward the disabilities under which the people in these north-east districts labour, but we could mention several districts in Western Australia, such as the North-West, where the people are labouring under disabilities as well as people at Norseman. It is, however, advisable to draw attention to these things. I would like to know the source from which the Premier got his reports in connection with the mines in the Norseman district, because there are some statements with which I disagree, such as the statement with regard to the Lady Miller mine and other properties. I hope to be able to see these reports, because I do not think they are hardly clear or satisfactory, to my way of thinking. I would like to make further inquiries into

them before I give a definite opinion on them. I am glad the members for Kaitumaing and West Perth, who have had great experience on this question, have decided to support this railway, and intend to do all they possibly can to push forward the development of the goldfields. I think they are wise in doing so. It does not matter what the future of Western Australia may be, I contend that the immediate future and prosperity of the State depends on pushing forward the development of our goldfields and getting a good return from the goldfields, in order that people settling on the land will have a market at their door, and so that we will be able to open up agricultural centres. I am glad this measure has received such little opposition, and I hope that next session the Government will take into consideration the absolute necessities of other goldfields for railway communication. I trust they will bring in measures to open up other parts of the State, just as they are doing to open up the Norseman district.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): I regret I cannot see my way to support this motion. It is a matter I have been pledged to oppose. I look at this railway as one of the most dangerous lines that could be built in the State, as affecting the interests of coastal towns and agricultural districts. I look upon it as the first section to Esperance.

MR. HOBAN: Nobody else does.

MR. STONE: I think nearly all who have spoken have thought in their minds that it would be an easy matter to construct the other section when this is completed. This matter has been before Parliament some few years, and it was threshed out pretty hotly. I had the pleasure of perusing Admiralty charts some few years ago, and they showed that it is almost impossible to make a safe harbour at Esperance without the expenditure of something like a million pounds. There are shoals and reefs for about 30 to 40 miles out from the coast, so that a system of lighthouses would be needed to enable any boat to get in; and when a boat does get in there is no sheltered position. It brings that part of the State close to South Australia, and the supplies for the goldfields will be brought from South

Australia, and the market which our farmers now enjoy will be lost. I know this Bill will be carried by a large majority, still I have promised to vote against the measure. It is against the best interests of the towns in the coastal districts and the farmers of the State that the line should be built. We have spent large sums of money settling people on the land, and now by means of this railway are cutting away from them their market. It is a serious undertaking, and I feel called on to vote against the Bill.

MR. J. EWING (Collie): Exception has been taken this evening by the member for Claremont to this measure, and he has drawn attention to one aspect of the question which I feel justified in speaking on, the continuation of the line to Esperance. I was a member of the House three or four years ago, when this matter was sharply discussed, and the people on the goldfields and members of Parliament then made a mistake in bringing forward the construction of the Esperance line in conjunction with the construction of the Norseman line. I recognise that every portion of the State deserves to be developed, and the Premier in placing this question before us gave such facts and figures as will justify every member in giving support to the proposition. Furthermore, when the Premier elaborated his speech, he stated what must be clear to every member, that the proposed railway is justified on its merits. While voting for the construction of the Coolgardie-Norseman line we do not in any way bind ourselves to vote for a continuation of the line to Esperance. I should be sorry to be a member of the House and pass Bills which would give away the rights of any portion of the State. From the facts and figures it is evident that for the last 13 or 14 years people have endeavoured to develop the Norseman field with little success. It does not follow that because success has not been attained that the Norseman field might not have been pretty well as good as Kalgoorlie itself if it had been developed. We had the gratifying knowledge this afternoon from the Premier, that since this question has been put into tangible shape before the country people are prepared to invest their money in developing the Norseman

goldfield. That is gratifying and I think members should look on the question from the standpoint of the development of the gold resources in this portion of the State. I am gratified to know from the Premier that the people in Norseman themselves, those who have been working there, even the miners he said and those interested in the mines, have found a large amount of money in developing the properties there in that goldfield. Rome was not built in a day, and no doubt Peak Hill and other portions of the State will get their just dues as time goes by. The fact of the geographical position of Norseman should not be a question in the minds of members at this juncture, but we should do something for those living in the district. I would not for a moment cast my vote for the second reading of the Bill unless I was perfectly sure from the information supplied that the line was justified, and from the fact that in the minds of the Government there is no idea of a continuation of this line. Everyone who has any practical knowledge must know that in putting in half-round sleepers, and with grades of 1 in 40, it is self-evident that the Government have not any idea in view of continuing this line. That being the case, and wishing to do what I can to develop all portions of the State, I shall give my hearty support to the Bill before the House.

MR. W. C. ANGWIN (East Fremantle): This is a line that has been under consideration for a considerable time. Twelve months ago I had an opportunity of reviewing the various reports as to this railway, and I say the report presented by the State Mining Engineer was of such a nature that I came to the conclusion that a railway to Norseman was warranted. We have heard a good deal to-night in regard to the requirements of this field, but not a word has been said in regard to the annual loss to the State which will follow on account of the cost of running the line. This is a point that members have overlooked entirely, and consequently their attention has been drawn away in such a manner that otherwise would have made them speak differently. A good deal has been said to-night in regard to the grade on this railway, the size of the

sleepers, and the rails to be used, and it has been argued that the line would not be built through to the coast. We have known in the past of numbers of railways where the grades have been altered and new sleepers have been put in without Parliament ever being consulted in the matter. The same thing may occur as far as this railway is concerned. At the same time the information which I have before me would not warrant me in voting against the second reading of the Bill. Every care should be taken to see that this railway, when constructed, shall if possible be made a payable concern. The officers of the department, when inspecting the line, came to the conclusion that it would not pay. The conclusion arrived at was that according to the reports the district warranted a railway, not altogether to Norseman but for the various centres *en route*. I think, from the reports presented to the Government dealing with that question, that greater benefit will be derived to the State from the centres *en route* to Norseman than from the Norseman field itself. As far as the trade of the port of Fremantle is concerned, I do not think that will be affected one iota. If the railway goes to Esperance, as far as Fremantle is concerned I do not think that line would affect the port of Fremantle in the least degree. I believe the people of the State will realise that if the trade of Western Australia is to be placed in other channels outside Western Australia some other steps will have to be taken to convert the trade to our own State. To the northern portion of the State we have heavy shipping freights, and the time may arrive when we shall have to run steamers of our own to develop the trade in this State. I do not think, therefore, that the railway will hinder the trade in this State.

MR. H. BROWN (Perth): I move the adjournment of the debate. We were told that when these lines were brought forward the plans and reports of the engineers would be laid on the table. They are not here, and for that reason I move the adjournment.

THE PREMIER: The plans and reports are here.

Motion passed, the debate adjourned.

BILL—DONNYBROOK-PRESTON VALLEY RAILWAY.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): In recommending the proposal for the construction of a line from Donnybrook to the Upper Blackwood *via* Preston Valley, I do so with every confidence, recognising that it will pass through one of the most favoured areas of the State both as regards climate, soil, and rainfall. I can speak of this line from an intimate association with the locality in practising my profession as a surveyor, and also in reporting on the timber forests in that particular district on behalf of the Government some years ago. The information which has been distributed gives certain particulars in regard to the probable cost of the construction, the cost of the railway, the style of sleepers, and the grade it is proposed we shall have on this line. From that information it will be seen the approximate length of the line will be 50 miles. At present, as shown on the plans, the proposed terminal point will be in what is known as Boyup Brook. It is proposed, when the survey of the later portion of the line has been made, the terminal point of the railway should, if practicable, be in the centre of a block which has quite recently been forfeited to the Government and reported on by one of the officers of the department, Mr. Inspector Thompson, who, in reporting on this area of 98,000 acres which has been classified, states that there are something like 40,600 acres of first-class land in this block, 40,000 odd acres of second-class land, while the balance is third-class land. From the statement which has been supplied to members, it will be seen that with this line it is proposed to make the ruling grade 1 in 40, and this is a very simple matter in this particular line from the fact that we are following the natural contour of the country; practically the whole of the last 30 miles of the line follows the watershed of the Preston valley. When the line was first mooted it was proposed that the line should be built *via* Preston Valley, but after the survey was made it was considered by the Government, in order to give proper facilities of transport to the Greenbushes field, then in the early part

of its existence, that it would be advisable to construct the line as near as possible following the main road from Donnybrook to Bridgetown, although it was represented by the engineers that the Preston route would mean an increase of some ten or twelve miles to Bridgetown *via* Upper Preston. That would mean that the line would traverse a country presenting very few engineering difficulties, and the line, as far as haulage was concerned, was far preferable to the one built from Donnybrook to Bridgetown. Although the present line no doubt opened up a large area of good country and serves the Greenbushes tinfields, yet the fact remains that certain portions of the line are something like 1,000 feet above sea-level, whilst in some places it falls to 500 feet, and again at Bridgetown the railway rises to about 1,000 feet. Hon. members will recognise that the line, although it opens up a lot of timber country and carries a considerable amount of traffic, still must necessarily be a more expensive line to work than this proposed line up the Preston Valley. In regard to the proposed railway there is little question as to route, for the simple reason that it must necessarily follow the Preston Valley; and it does follow the Preston Valley for something like 30 miles and then falls into the watershed of the Blackwood, the terminal point, as I have said, being in the vicinity of what is known as the Boyup Brook. From the information given it will be perceived that the cost of construction has been put down at £38,000, while the rails and fastenings have been estimated at £32,000. I consider the estimate of cost of construction a very liberal one indeed, and I am satisfied that when the completed sections are out it will be found that the engineers have been able to reduce the earthworks very considerably, thus reducing the cost of the line. As regards timber for construction purposes, this is practically available over every foot of the line; and it has been arranged with people through whose property the line goes that claims for compensation shall not be made. A distinct agreement to that effect will be entered into before the line is built—that is, provided we do not interfere with permanent improvements such as houses or orchards. I feel

satisfied that this line will cost considerably less than the amount shown on the estimate. Hon. members will perceive that the land under cultivation this year represents something like 9,000 acres, the land cleared 16,900, and the land ringbarked something like 60,000 acres; while the population to be served will be something like 1,600 souls. The total area of the land within the influence of the railway is 693,000 acres; while the land which has been classified is divided into 60,000 acres of first-class, 86,400 of second-class, and 352,000 acres of third-class land. Regarding the question from the freightage point of view, this line must be placed in the forefront of all the railway proposals we have brought down; because I am satisfied that as soon as this line is built it will open up a large area of timber forests, which can be made available to the timber getter at an early date. I have been assured by many small millowners—Drysdale, Sexton, and others—that they intend to commence operations in these forests as soon as the line is opened. At present there is a 15-load mill cutting along the Preston Valley, and I am satisfied that four or five other mills, with a capacity of at least 100 loads per day, will be in full operation shortly after the line is built. As the House is aware, very little timber land is at present available within reach of railway communication; very little indeed is available for small companies, large areas being held by some large companies; and under the conditions now existent—it will be remembered that no farther timber leases are to be granted—any land taken up for timber purposes in this district will be held under sawmilling permit, which provides for a 10-years life to every mill, an area being reserved proportionate to the cutting capacity of the mill. This will do away with any monopoly, and at the same time will give the small millowner an opportunity of entering into competition for the local trade more especially. In addition, the sleeper hewers will have ample opportunity to ply their craft in this particular district. An undertaking has been obtained by an officer of the Forestry Department to the effect that owners of jarrah land served by this railway will sell their timber to the sleeper hewers or small millowners at the rate of

1s. per load in the round—that is the amount the Government now receive as royalty. This will practically mean that as soon as the line is opened the timber hewers will be able to get to work, and will be able to land their sleepers on the railway at a much cheaper rate than is at present possible on any part of our railway system. As I have stated, this will be of much advantage to, and will greatly stimulate the activities and opportunities of, the small timber-men; and it is desirable in the best interests of the State that we should as far as possible encourage the small millowner and the hewer. Therefore, as regards traffic, I have placed this railway as the most promising, because of its timber trade. Apart from timber freightage, it will earn a greater revenue than can be looked for from any of the light railways now before the country. In support of my contention, I should like to quote certain figures supplied by Mr. Inspector Brockman, who had some year or two ago an opportunity of making an examination and a classification of the land. As far as timber is concerned, Mr. Brockman estimates that at the present day, at a moderate computation, there is at least 1,600,000 loads of marketable timber within easy distance of this railway. I have had an opportunity of seeing that forest myself, and it is indeed one of the finest forests in our State. Owing to the fact that it has been so isolated practically no timber at all has been removed from it, though a few very long piles have been taken. Owing to the fact that in this locality jarrah grows to exceptional length, timber-getters have on occasions gone 20 and even 30 miles from the present railway line to secure long sticks for special work. Mr. Forest Ranger Hastie, who has had an unusually long experience of jarrah timber in Western Australia, recently inspected this particular district, and he reports:—

From the head of the Preston River the land begins to get light, and is timbered with jarrah, and jarrah and redgum. This jarrah country extends for about 18 miles along the proposed route, some of which is held by timber lessees, but most of it is virgin country. Referring to this timber Mr. Forest Ranger Hastie reported on the 4th October last:—

I have examined the back country from the head of the Preston River and found there a

forest of jarrah, which is one of the finest I have met with in my experience. One portion of it, about 10 miles long and six miles wide, is particularly valuable, and I estimate the capabilities of this patch at between 10 and 12 loads to the acre. Indeed, I noticed patches of this particular belt that would yield as high as 40 loads in the round. There are trees that range from 60 feet to 90 feet to the first branch—not one, but hundreds.

And this statement I can confirm from personal knowledge. Apart from any other consideration, with such a magnificent belt of timber to open up, there can be little doubt that this railway will pay interest and sinking fund even from the start. These promising districts, the Upper Preston and the Upper Blackwood, have been retarded through lack of transport facilities. It will be seen from the figures I have referred to that 187,000 acres have been alienated, the settlers holding on an average 900 acres per man. The largest holding in the district served by this railway, some 4,000 acres, is held by Mr. Walters, who is a most progressive settler. Therefore, it may justly be claimed that the land is well distributed, and that no land monopolies will be enhanced in value by the carrying out of this proposition. Not more than a dozen settlers hold over 1,000 acres; and on the land taken up, considering the heavy nature of the clearing, excellent work is being done. In the Preston Valley alone 350 acres are under orchard, and another 1,250 acres have been cleared in preparation. These figures are of value only as showing what can be done under adverse circumstances by settlers whose holdings are more or less remotely situated. With farther reference to the fact that some 350 acres in the Valley are given over to fruit-growing, I may state these orchards vary from one acre up to 70 acres. I find there are along the proposed line no fewer than 47 settlers with orchards on their properties. The largest is that of Mr. Walters, containing 70 acres. He expects this season to take 500 cases per acre off that orchard, or a total of 35,000 cases. Mr. Smith, a resident some ten miles along the Valley, has 30 acres under orchard, and expects to reap a total of 12,000 cases. Mr. Lyon has 30 acres of orchard, and expects an average of 550 cases per acre, or a total of 16,500 cases; while Mr. Martin, who

recently settled there and bought an improved property, with 35 acres under crop, expects an average of 500 cases, or a total of 17,500 cases; so that out of a total of 350 acres, taking a fair average of 500 cases per acre, it is expected that there will be at least 175,000 cases of fruit this year. While the area of land under fruit is comparatively small, this is one of the most important economic assets of these districts. Most of the orchards have not yet reached the bearing stage; but in three or four years I am satisfied the output will be doubled. The apple industry promises to develop into importance, and each year will show an increased output for the railway to handle. In their planting, these orchardists have started on right lines, benefiting by the experience of other States in the selection of their fruit trees. The reception given to the trial shipment of apples sent to the old country last year, and also the reception given in Germany, are evidence that we have a big future in our apple trade, and it is our duty to encourage as much as possible this particular branch of our industries. Another feature of this railway proposal is that the traffic will be regular and well sustained, and will not be so much characterised by the violent rush for a few months, followed by a period of comparative stagnation, which distinguishes the wheat trade. The district is essentially one adapted for mixed farming, and in this connection it is interesting to note that the Valley settlers own something like 16,000 sheep, each man having a small flock; only a few average more than 1,000 head, the district average being between 200 and 400 head. This is essentially encouraging for the future, and shows how successfully mixed farming is being practised throughout this district. In New Zealand the small farmer, the man with a few hundred sheep, is the backbone of the freezing industry, which is worth to that colony £6,000,000 per annum, an amount almost equal to our gold yield. Hon. members may rest satisfied that in the near future this State is bound to become a great meat-exporting country; and I look to the frozen-lamb trade to make it that. The settlers not only in this Valley, but all those within the influence of the railway will benefit so

far as the frozen-lamb trade is concerned. In the Valley we find that the farmer whose holding has been improved at all can keep $1\frac{1}{2}$ sheep to the acre. When the holdings have been properly grassed and fenced into small paddocks, there should be no difficulty in going as high as two sheep to the acre. The cultivation of such grasses as *paspalum dilatatum*, which thrives luxuriantly in this district, is evidence that with the assistance of these grasses, districts which have a good rainfall will be able to increase largely the carrying capacity of their holdings. This particular district is essentially fitted for root crops all along the Valley. There are something like 4,000 or 5,000 acres which are sufficiently moist all the year without irrigation to be available for potato cultivation. In regard to the dairying industry there is very little done in this district. Something like 200 or 300 cows have been kept, but there is nothing to stop anyone with the necessary enterprise and energy from embarking in dairying. There is nothing to stop them from making a very excellent livelihood. The Valley as a whole is particularly adapted for this branch of farming. I refer principally to what may be known as the lower portion of the line, that is the valley of the Preston. With regard to what may be termed the Upper Blackwood portion of the line, the possibility for intense sheep culture is very great, and the very fact that a large proportion of this land was held under poison lease has really been a blessing in disguise, for if had it not been held for poison lease it would have meant that we should have had very large holdings, instead of as at the present time land which can be made available in greatly reduced areas. In regard to the particular portion which I have referred to as having been recently classified, at the risk of wearying the House I should like to just briefly quote from some remarks of Inspector Thompson, who was authorised to make this classification. He reports as to the 98,000 acres which he has inspected, the land contained in late P.P.R. 8/261 and the land adjoining:—

I find there are 40,600 acres of first-class lands out of the total area, and I consider that I have under-estimated the area rather than over-estimated it. The quality of this class of land varies; in some places it is a rich red

loam, and the rest a dark sandy loam. Portions of it are low-lying, and consequently wet in winter; this is on account of the gullies being flat and no defined water-courses on them, and the water spreads all over these flats, which are in some cases over 40 chains wide. There would be no difficulty in regard to draining as there is ample fall to the river. A plough furrow would be sufficient run down the centre of the gully, as the water would there make a channel for itself. The soil on these flats is chiefly a dark sandy loam, with a good clay subsoil, and would be adapted for growing cereals etc., and would in my opinion be most suitable for dairying, and with slight irrigation would grow root crops. That splendid fodder grass *paspalum dilatatum* should grow well here, as I am told that these flats are more or less wet the greater part of the summer. That this grass thrives well in this locality is evidenced by a plot which Mr. G. Meagher, who holds land adjoining, showed me, where he has been experimenting with this grass on more inferior soil, and it appeared to be firmly established and was doing well.

That the land in this particular part will grow cereals to perfection has been and is being proved year after year, for on the Dinninup and Boyup Brook I have seen crops grown without any manures quite equal to any grown along the Great Southern Railway or in the Eastern districts with manure.

For immigrants from England or elsewhere I consider it is an ideal spot, that is with railway communication within easy distance, for without that these districts must remain purely grazing districts, for the following reasons: (a.) Clearing. The clearing on a large area of the first-class land is very light, being blackboys and a few flooded gums, in some cases only three or four of the latter to an acre; the blackboys only would have to be cleared or chopped down, and the plough could go between and around the trees for the first year or two. The soil also is land that can be easily worked.

(b.) Water Supply. There is a never-failing supply of good fresh water in the pools which are permanent in the Blackwood River, some of these pools being three or four miles around them, and water could be obtained almost anywhere in the back country by sinking at a reasonable depth. When the country is ring-barked most of these flat gullies should contain water nearly all the year round or at least be very near the surface.

The carrying capabilities of this land for stock have been proved to be equal to if not better than other lands in the South-West or Great Southern districts even in its natural state, and tropical grasses should grow on the wet flats along the gullies, while rape, cocksfoot, and other grasses should grow on the "high" lands adjoining.

I do not wish to quote the whole of Mr. Thompson's remarks, but just an indication of what he considers the quality of

the land in that particular district. I have also referred to the question of poison plant which, as I have stated, is responsible for the fact that the land has been closed from settlement to a very large extent. And referring to this question of poison plant he states:—

There are two classes of poison plants, the York Road and bloem poison, growing on the area; in some places the York Road is very thick, but does not cover, even in the worst places, a larger area than 10 acres; in others it is scattered about, up a gully or along a spur, while a very large proportion of the area has no poison on it at all. I do not consider that it will be hard to eradicate the poison plants when the land is settled, and do not think there is "poison" in sufficient quantity to debar anyone from selecting any part of the area. The fact of so much stock running on these lands continually, and it is now the worst time of the year, proves that it is even now fairly safe to pasture stock on.

Mr. Thompson, in conclusion, makes a recommendation in regard to certain subdivision of this particular area, for which instructions will be given almost immediately. He recommends that the whole area he refers to, the 98,000 acres, be cut up into blocks varying in size from 500 acres to 1,000 acres, which will mean that, given railway facilities, this land, which was practically worth to the Crown from 5s. to 7s. per acre, we shall be able to dispose of readily at double the price. Consequently for that reason alone I think it is a very big argument in regard to the advisability of constructing this line. As I have pointed out, in the Upper Blackwood country numbers of settlers are diligently striving to make the land reproductive in face of the awkward fact that very often to a large extent their efforts have been defeated owing to their being something like 50 miles from a railway. Last winter owing to the boggy nature of the roads in that vicinity as much as 2s. per ton was paid for transport for 40 or 50 miles in consequence of the great difficulty experienced in getting material from the railway on to the stations which are being improved. It may be interesting to note that in this particular district during the last 12 months no less than 50,496 acres have been selected, 21,428 acres under Section 55, and 24,586 acres under Section 56, whilst there are something like 3,840 acres under Section 74. In this connection it is well to remember that every thousand acres

taken up means that at least £500 must be spent within the next ten years to enable a person to hold the land. But it also follows that it is necessary for him to expend considerably more than £500 to make a success of his holding, so that the mere fact of giving railway facilities to this particular district will mean that the land recently taken up will be greatly improved thereby, giving employment to a considerable number of men; whilst at the same time it will mean increased traffic to the railway. I do not wish to detain the House at any greater length in connection with this proposition, but I should like in conclusion to say that this line if constructed will open up extensive areas of good land, favoured with a generous and reliable rainfall, and we will have the unique opportunity of making homes for a great and prosperous people in this particular district, who are prepared to build their homes and rear their families in these favoured localities, and who will be prepared to transform what is now a forest into productive areas. I have great pleasure indeed in recommending this proposal to the favourable consideration of the House, and I move the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by MR. BATH, debate adjourned.

BILL—GREENHILLS-QUAIRADING RAILWAY.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): In introducing this Bill to the House I wish to state that information in connection with this line appears on the sheet which has been distributed to members this afternoon. I think they may take it that if anything, the figures there are under-estimated. They have been prepared with the greatest care, and are the result of personal investigation by officers of my department. It is well known to all members that in connection with this line there is a difference of opinion as to the route which should be adopted. I think that any route east from Greenhills would have been a fairly satisfactory one, but I want the House to understand clearly that this difference of local opinion has only led the Government more carefully to consider what route

should ultimately be adopted. This line, as members will be aware, is an extension of some 30 miles of the present York-Greenhills line, and that being so we may reasonably expect that the running expenses of this line will not be as heavy as they would be if the line were a separate and distinct spur line. Already we have traffic running from York to Greenhills, and the same rolling-stock will to a very large extent serve this extension of the railway. Two routes were under consideration, one surveyed by Mr. Burnett, and the other by Mr. Brockman. The route surveyed by Mr. Burnett has its termination some five miles north of the termination at present suggested. That would bring the area in between the easterly extension of the Greenhills line somewhat too near to the goldfields line to get a proper use of the various lines running into that locality. These reports were submitted to Mr. More, the inspector of lines in the Avon district, who after much consideration reported in favour of Mr. Brockman's route. The two alternative routes were put before Mr. Muir, and he also decided in favour of this one which the Government have adopted; so the House will understand that the very fact of this local difference of opinion has led the Government to be extremely careful as to the route which should be adopted. Mr. Brockman in his report on this route says in referring to Mr. Burnett's route that it runs through a considerable amount of sandplain; but in so far as this particular route is selected, the one surveyed by Mr. Brockman, it runs practically through good country for the whole way. Members may also be glad to learn that this country has been personally inspected by the Premier, who has inquired on the spot into the merits of the two respective routes; so I do not think we can be charged with having in any way neglected to satisfy ourselves as to the best route towards the eastern portion of this district. The country is well known to members and the public generally as one of the best wheat-producing areas in the State. There are 210,000 acres already alienated, within the influence of the railway. It is only fair to the House to point out that in this area are five large holdings amounting in all to some 48,000 acres.

These include Dungen and Dorakin, 15,000 acres; Cubbine, 12,000; and Carolling, 9,000; but by far the largest portion of the settled country in this district is held by small farmers. Under the influence of the railway are 269,000 acres open to selection. On this area are some 220 resident settlers, the total population being 750. More than 260,000 acres are already classified for selection. The survey is practically completed, and will be finished by Christmas. The maps on the wall give most exhaustive information as to the various classes of country, distinguishing clearly between first-class, second-class, third-class, and unclassified land, and showing the land already alienated. As illustrating the difficulties encountered in selecting the route, I may mention that the petitions received from different parts of the district have been most carefully analysed. In one containing 167 signatures 27 only were those of landholders affected by the line, the balance comprising those of persons in no way interested, and of members of owners' families. Every care was taken that the best route should be selected. There are 12,000 acres already under cultivation in this area; and it is only reasonable to suppose it will yield at least some 4,000 tons of produce this year. Next year it is anticipated 20,000 acres additional will come under cultivation, bringing the probable return for that year to some 12,000 tons. I have all the more confidence in recommending this line, because it is an extension of an already existing spur line.

MR. BATH: But that is a nonpaying spur line.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is a nonpaying spur line because it is so short; and the very fact that we tack 30 miles on to it by this extension, which will go through some of the best wheat-growing country in the State, will do much to make the line a payable proposition throughout its whole length. I think it has been admitted on all hands that such lines cannot be expected to pay interest and sinking fund from the start; but undoubtedly there is every probability, almost a certainty, that this line will pay considerably more than working expenses. If members will look at the table furnished to them, they will find some 122,250 acres have already been ring-

barked. We all know that is simply the preliminary step towards bringing the land under cultivation. This is in every sense a wheat and chaff-growing area; and I feel sure that in passing the Bill we shall add to our railway system a line which in the near future may be relied on with a fair degree of certainty to become a reasonably paying proposition. Moreover, it will give railway facilities to many settlers now located at distances so great from the existing railway as almost to prohibit them from carrying on their ordinary avocation with profit to themselves. I commend the line to the favourable notice of the House; and if members desire any other information I shall be glad to give it in replying. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by MR. BATH, debate adjourned.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Railway Plans, Greenhills-Quairading, Coolgardie-Norseman, Donnybrook-Upper Blackwood.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the PREMIER, the House adjourned at seven minutes past 10 o'clock, until the next evening at 7.30 o'clock.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 5th December, 1906.

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

PRAYERS.

SITTING DAYS, EXTRA.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) moved—

That for the remainder of the session, in addition to the present days of sitting, the House do meet for the despatch of business on Mondays and Fridays at 4.30 p.m., and sit until 6.30 p.m., and from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

He was moving the motion in case it might be necessary to sit next Friday and on Monday. The Government hoped, as they had already announced, to be able to close the session on the 13th December, and in order to do that it was thought well to provide that we should sit on Fridays and Mondays in addition to the days on which we already sat. Of course, if there was no business and no necessity to sit on Monday, the House would not meet; but this motion was moved so that in case of necessity the House could sit.

Question put and passed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the Hon. J. T. GLOWREY, leave of absence for the remainder of the session granted to the Hon. W. Oats, on the ground of ill health.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—LOAN, £2,467,000.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): It gives me much pleasure to move the second reading of this Bill, which is part of the