

thing like seventeen millions sterling with a population of 182,000, or a debt of £104 per head as against £48 in New South Wales and £42 in Victoria. I think it is high time that the finances were placed in the hands of a board of competent experts, to put them once and for all before the people so that they may understand them.

A MEMBER: I hope you have got the experts.

MR. HOPKINS: Well, it is a certainty we never had them in the past. The cost of raising loans has gone up from £1 11s. 6d. to £2 17s. 3d. per cent. We have six millions to raise during the next two years, and the trouble is where to raise it. Two millions are required almost immediately. I am sure there will be considerable difficulty, as well as enormous expense, attached to the successful flotation of these loans. I will not detain the House any longer, except to say that I believe the present position of parties in this House is an indication that the majority is, as it were, on the left-hand side of the Speaker. I dare say that amongst those on the cross-benches there may be many who have been awaiting the opening of Parliament to shift their places, and I have not the slightest doubt we may see that eventuate shortly. If it does not occur, I undertake to say that the present Government will not be one to sit here at the wish of the party on the Opposition benches, leaving that party to say how long or how short their reign is to be. I undertake to say that the Ministry will have a majority behind them if they go to the country, and I sincerely hope they will do so if occasion arises. If the Government do not do that, there is only one thing better, and that is to introduce a Redistribution of Seats Bill. I undertake to say that if this Bill be introduced and carried forthwith, immediately it is done we shall have this Government in the position it is in to-day, only much more strongly backed than at the present time. I think it devolves on every citizen of this State to recognise that the present is not a time for playing "ins and outs." It devolves on every member of the House to recognise the same thing. It devolves on members to recognise that we are in a dangerous position at the present time. Although we may be, and

we may say that we are, a self-reliant people, with an enormous revenue of three millions sterling, still it devolves on us to throw in our lot behind the present Government, and enable them to do their best to raise the State from its present position of uncertainty and restore it to the realms of progress and stability. Mr. Speaker, I have pleasure in seconding the Address-in-reply.

On the motion by HON. F. H. PIESSE, debate adjourned until the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the PREMIER, the House adjourned at 4:41 o'clock until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 2nd July, 1901.

Swearing-in of Members—Papers presented—Question, Natives Charged with Murder—Sessional Orders—Roads Act Amendment Bill, postponement—Address-in-reply, second day of debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

The following members, who had not been present at the previous sitting, took and subscribed the oath of allegiance as required by law, and signed the members' roll:—Hon. R. S. Haynes, Hon. W. Spencer, Hon. J. M. Drew.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: 1 (Goldfields Acts) Amendment of Regulation 91, Amended Regulations as to Gold Dealers' Licenses, Regulations as to Miners' Homestead Leases, Alteration of Regulation *re* Reserved and Exempted Lands; 2 (Mines Regulation Act) New

Regulation as to Ventilation of Mines; 3 (Mineral Lands Act) Amendment of Regulations 46 and 72, and new Regulation 54A; 4, By-laws of municipalities of Busselton, Bunbury, Southern Cross, Kalgoorlie, Perth, Fremantle, Leederville, Helena Vale, East Fremantle, Leonora, Gingin, Perth, Fremantle; 5 (Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act) Regulations.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—NATIVES CHARGED WITH MURDER.

HON. E. McLARTY asked the Minister for Lands: 1, If the Government is aware that five natives were arrested, about December last, on a charge of murder of a native at West Kimberley? 2, If it is a fact that such natives have been detained in custody since such month without a trial having taken place? 3, If so, what is the reason for the delay?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. Sommers) replied:—1, Yes. 2, A Commission was issued on the 15th April last, and the natives have probably been tried. 3, Delay occurred owing to the absence of a Resident Magistrate.

SESSIONAL ORDERS.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. Sommers) moved:

That, unless otherwise ordered, the House do meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, at 4.30 p.m., and sit until 6.30 p.m. if necessary and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

HON. C. A. PIESSE (South-East) moved as an amendment that "4.30" be struck out, and "3" inserted in lieu. A majority of members were with him; at any rate the country members must agree to an alteration of this kind. It had been suggested that we meet at half-past two. That would be somewhat early, though the Federal Parliament met at the same hour. The hour of 3 would very well meet requirements, giving one and a-half hours longer than previously. For the sake of country members, town members might make some sacrifice. Previously, there had been some disposition to alter the hour of meeting, which had for a long time given dissatisfaction.

HON. R. S. HAYNES (Central) opposed the amendment. At present this House met at the same hour as the other, and if the practice were altered, difficulty would probably arise. It was not obvious that our meeting at 3 o'clock would facilitate business. As a rule, the House met at 4.30, and in most instances finished work by 8 or 9 o'clock—frequently earlier. It was not as if there were a certain amount of work to be despatched. The House had frequently to wait till Bills, etcetera, were forwarded from another place; consequently the amendment would hardly save time. This could better be effected by shortening hon. members' speeches. Evidently the amendment had been moved for the purpose of discussion only. During the next session, an attempt might be made to alter the hours of meeting of both Houses.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM (South) seconded the amendment. Consideration was due to country members. Meeting at 4.30, the House frequently sat till 8 or 9 o'clock; consequently country members must remain in Perth all night, the train to the goldfields and to certain agricultural districts leaving at 7.30. By starting at 3 o'clock, there would be three and a-half hours before tea hour, and, during last session, sittings of the House had not often lasted more than about three hours.

HON. R. G. BURGESS (East) supported the amendment. The Federal Parliament met at 2.30. Surely State Parliaments could follow suit, thus permitting country members to leave town the same evening. Town members were always in Perth.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Country members were always asking for consideration.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: But never received any, town members being in a majority, and practically all-powerful. The six goldfields members and other country representatives should surely be given this concession.

HON. M. L. MOSS (West) opposed the amendment, which would hardly achieve the object of the mover, to avoid evening sittings. During the greater part of the session, the extra one and a-half hours between 3 and 4.30 would not obviate sitting after 7 p.m. It was

necessary to wait after that hour for Messages from another place, and many times an adjournment had to be made till 7:30.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: Only towards the end of a session.

HON. M. L. MOSS: At the commencement of a session the House frequently adjourned for two or three weeks. To pass the amendment would be extremely inadvisable, for this House would then sit at an hour when the other House was not sitting, and the object of the mover would not be achieved.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West) opposed the amendment, which would be most inconvenient. Members representing southern districts would find it almost impossible to be in their places at 3, the train arriving at 2:30, leaving but half an hour for lunch.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: How many country members would be affected?

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Two.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. Sommers): As a country member, he must oppose the amendment. The fact that the Federal Parliament met at 3 o'clock should not bind this House. The former body had a great variety of subjects to consider, and were therefore expected to devote much time to their business.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): Unless the mover of the amendment were assured of the concurrence of the other House, the arguments against it were very strong, for it would involve difficulty between the two Houses if we met at 3 and the Assembly at 4:30. Personally, he (Mr. Randell) would not object to attend at 2:30; but it would be extremely difficult for Ministers to attend at that hour, and at the same time carry out Ministerial duties. The earliest hour at which Ministers could attend was 4 or 4:30.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: In the event of the other House agreeing to alter their hour of meeting, could the amendment be again moved here?

THE PRESIDENT: Certainly.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: In view of the objections, he would withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Motion put and passed.

STANDING COMMITTEES.

On motions by the MINISTER FOR LANDS, Committees for the session were appointed as follow:—

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. J. W. Hackett, Hon. H. Briggs, Hon. A. Jameson, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess, and authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. J. W. Hackett, Hon. M. L. Moss, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer on matters of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Assembly.

HOUSE COMMITTEE.—The President, Hon. J. M. Speed, Hon. R. S. Haynes, and the mover; with power to act during the recess, and to confer with any similar committee of the Legislative Assembly.

PRINTING COMMITTEE.—The President, the Hon. M. L. Moss, and the mover.

ROADS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

POSTPONEMENT.

Order read for second reading of the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. Sommers) moved that the order be postponed till the next Thursday.

Question put and passed, and the order postponed.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

SECOND DAY OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed on the Address-in-reply, moved on 28th June by Hon. H. Lukin and seconded by Hon. J. D. Connolly.

HON. M. L. MOSS (West): I am sure every member of this House agrees with the sentiments expressed in the first three paragraphs of the Speech. The fourth paragraph deals with the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia, and no doubt that matter is of sufficient importance to have been referred to in His Excellency's Speech. It is a happy termination to the various fights which have taken place in this State, that the Commonwealth is now an established body, and that Western Australia is partici-

pating in the great work which, unquestionably, the Commonwealth Parliament has before it. It would have been, no doubt, a serious blot to have attempted to federate Australia if so large a portion of the continent as that comprised within this State had been omitted from the federation. Our representatives, happily, are now at the seat of Government in Melbourne, participating in the important work of constituting the various departments and taking part in that legislation which is necessary to set the machinery in going order. Reference is made to the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, and no doubt the people in this State will join with their brothers in the rest of Australia in according to their Royal Highnesses a reception as fitting as we in West Australia can give them. As one who was present at the celebrations in the State of Victoria, I trust that in this State, although we may not be able to do as much as was done in Victoria, our people will not be wanting in showing their loyalty to their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, and give them as good a reception as the means at their disposal will allow. For the first time in parliamentary history in this State, since the establishment of responsible government, the Parliament is confronted with a new Ministry, and throughout the length and breadth of the country some supporters of the Ministry are very loud in their praises, and very loud in their condemnation, in many instances, of those gentlemen who from time to time have occupied the Treasury benches in another place. I think it is only fair at this juncture, when a new Ministry has taken the reins of power, to not altogether forget the good work accomplished by the previous Ministry. It is only a fair thing at the present time that we should look back at what the country was in 1890, when Sir John Forrest took office, and to look at the position of the country to-day. Blunders may have been committed and mistakes have been made, because whoever may have been the Premier and the Ministers of the State during the past ten years could not have carried on the vast amount of business and have been responsible for all that has taken place without

mistakes having occurred; therefore I have no desire to say that the work of the late Administration was perfect in all its parts; but this I will say, that those who remember the State in 1890, when we had a population of from 40 to 50 thousand persons, and when the revenue was under half a million, and look at it to-day when we have a population approaching 200,000 persons and a revenue of over three millions, also the development the country has undergone and the more beneficial position every man is in who was a resident of the country in 1890, must admit that it speaks volumes for those persons who were responsible for the administration of the government of the country during those 10 years. In this Chamber there are supposed to be no parties, and I hope, so far as I am personally concerned, I shall always be able to keep that in view in considering every measure which comes to this Chamber. I shall regard it as my duty to consider every measure on its merits, irrespective of the ties that bind members in another place to vote for measures for party consideration; therefore, with these objects in view it is my desire at the present time that the Administration should get a fair trial. I am perfectly prepared to consider every measure of policy of the new Administration on its merits, but I do not mean to say that I am prepared absolutely to swallow any programme put before us from time to time. I shall reserve to myself the right to criticise the measures put before us for our approval. I certainly think the new Ministry should have a fair trial, and, as far as my limited power will permit, they will get it. There is one matter that, as far as the Ministry is concerned at the present time, meets with my strong disapproval. Another place is constituted of 50 members; this place is constituted of 30; yet the Government have taken upon themselves to constitute honorary portfolios, and a Ministry of six members in another place is a very large number indeed. When we think that the bulk of the business is transacted, not with a full House, but I may say, speaking generally, with 25 to 30 members present, the object in my opinion should have been to reduce the number of Ministers rather than increase them; and while I congratulate the Hon.

A. Jameson on his elevation to the position of a Minister, still I equally condemn the policy with regard to this Chamber. I am strongly of opinion that it is an expedient that should not have been resorted to, and in my opinion is not calculated in the best interests of the country. What do we find is the position at the present time? I contend that the number of Ministers should be reduced, and I think that my contention has some weight. We, as one of the States of the Commonwealth, have handed over the Customs Department, the Post Office and Telegraphs, and the Defence Department to the Commonwealth Government, and other departments probably will follow; but even now we are rid of two or three, leaving the Railway Department out, of the largest departments of the State, and in my opinion there is not the work now to engage the attention of the Ministry that there was prior to the 1st of January of this year. In my opinion the number of Ministers should have been reduced to four, three in another place and one in this Chamber, which would have been ample for the requirements of this State. We are now promised in the Government programme a measure of electoral reform. The question of electoral reform seemingly comes up every year. We are promised electoral rights, and no doubt the creation of electors' rights will go along way to prevent impersonation at elections; still I do not think the issue of electors' rights will remove that apathy which exists amongst the people in connection with parliamentary elections. The outcry from time to time, and the complaints which are made, of the unworkable nature of the electoral law, as I have said over and over again, is more attributable to the apathy of the electors than anything else. People never, except during election times, bother themselves as to whether they are on the rolls or not. The facilities with which people obtain votes at the present time are reasonable, and it is only on the dawn of an election that people think that their rights are seriously jeopardised and their privileges infringed. People do not consider this when an election is not the order of the day. I am thoroughly in accord with the proposal to abolish plural voting: it seems to be the corollary to the Commonwealth Act that plural voting should go by the

board. For the Commonwealth, members are returned according to the one-man-one vote principle, and the Commonwealth Act properly lays it down that no person shall vote twice during an election. I have always thought that property in this country has far too great a say in parliamentary elections. What I particularly refer to are the electoral districts and provinces in the northern portion of the State. It is a great blot on the Constitution Act, and the Electoral law, that members of Parliament should be returned by 30 or 40 voters: that inequality should be swept away. We find in the populous centres of Perth and Fremantle, and on the goldfields, that members represent some thousands of electors; and if in other parts people are given the same parliamentary power by 30 or 40 voters, it is manifestly unfair, and I think should be put an end to. I am satisfied that the views of the people, or a large majority, are absolutely opposed to this condition of things. As far as my efforts are concerned I shall do what I can to assist the Government to abolish plural voting, and I think while the Government are dealing with the Constitution Act some steps should certainly be taken to reduce the number of members of both Houses of Parliament. I have already indicated that as far as the Ministry are concerned a reduction should be made there, and my idea is that the number of electoral provinces should be reduced to nine returning two members each, and that the Assembly districts should be reduced to 40. If that be done and the number of Ministers reduced to four, this country will save six or seven thousand pounds a year. While dealing with this point, I desire to make reference to a statement made by Mr. Connolly in moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply. He drew the attention of the House to an exceedingly important matter especially in regard to this Chamber, for he pointed out that the elections for this Chamber take place in May. Under the Electoral Act the Court for the revision of the rolls sits in May, and Mr. Connolly has instanced the inconvenience that arose in regard to his own election. He has told us that the electors in the province were under the impression, and so were the candidates,

that the election would be contested on the rolls in force at the time the writ was issued, but through the Revision Court sitting the election was contested on the rolls passed by the Revision Court which was held in May. There can be no two opinions that where the districts are populous, such as on the goldfields and in the coastal districts, it becomes a matter of great inconvenience to those contesting an election if they are unaware up to the time of the issue of the writ whether the election is to be on the existing rolls or the rolls which are to be brought forward in a few days. It is a matter which seems a simple one to remedy, and when we are amending the Constitution Act we could make the Court sit in June instead of in May. There is one more point that strikes me, and I offer a suggestion to the Government that in dealing with any amendment of the Constitution Act, provision be made that Ministers on accepting office shall not be required to go up for re-election. I believe I am speaking correctly when I say that in New Zealand, in South Australia, and also in the case of the Federal Parliament, there is no necessity for a member elevated to the position of Minister to vacate his seat and stand for re-election. This practice of being re-elected has, I presume, come from the old country, where there are septennial Parliaments. There, no doubt, during that long period of years, a member gets very much out of touch with his constituents. But in Australia, where we have triennial Parliaments in the majority of cases, a Minister will be either fresh from his electors or an average period of not more than about 18 months will elapse before he will be obliged to go before his constituency. In these circumstances, I hope that reform will be brought about, because, at the present time, elections of Ministers are frequently made opportunities for forcing persons put into Ministerial positions to spend money. (A MEMBER: Hear, hear.) I am quite satisfied that, in many instances which I do not wish to particularise, candidates have been put up against gentlemen elevated to Ministerial rank, not in the hope of preventing the re-election of the Minister, but with the idea of compelling him to spend money. If the Government propose any

amendment of the Constitution Act, this is a matter with which they should deal immediately. Part of the policy of this Government is apparently the expenditure of money on the survey of additional lines of railway; and here I pause to say that in the policy speeches delivered in various parts of the country, during the last two or three weeks, by members of the Ministry, there is a piece of inconsistency which is very hard to reconcile. We are told that the finances of the country are in such a position that we cannot construct new railways for years to come; that all we can do at present is to build lines that have already been authorised, and to complete railways now in course of construction. And yet, though we are told the finances are in such a condition that it will take the Government all their time for the next three or four years to raise money to construct lines already authorised, we are asked, or shall be asked, to agree to the expenditure of money for surveys of new lines. Firstly, I am strongly opposed at the present time to the expenditure of money on the construction of any new railways. We do not know what will be the effect of federation on our finances; therefore I am quite in accord with Mr. Lukin that this is a time for caution: this is a time when we should be exceedingly careful. I will not say the Government are not perfectly right in endeavouring to make those railways now in course of construction sufficiently efficient to earn money, and to complete them. The Government, I think, are bound to build lines already authorised; but there, I think, they should stop. The proposal to survey new lines of railway is capable of one of two constructions. Either it is a sop to some part of the State, with the object of leading people to suppose that these lines are to be constructed, or the Government are very inconsistent in the attitude they take up. And I think I am echoing the sentiments of the majority of hon. members of this Chamber when I say that sort of thing must be put a stop to. If the Government do not intend to construct those lines—and I think we can only assume that the statements made by the members of the Ministry are genuine statements—then it is the height of absurdity to spend money on surveying railways which the

Government have no intention of making; while, on the other hand, it is equally absurd, if the finances are in the state described, that the Government should incur fresh obligations in making surveys of lines they have no intention of building. Possibly what is underlying the proposals of the Government is the construction of the Esperance line. In my opinion, that line is, at the present time, thoroughly unwarranted.

A MEMBER: And there is no chance of getting it.

HON. M. L. MOSS: If that line is to be proposed on account of the development of the Dundas goldfield, then I have no hesitation in saying that development does not at present justify the construction of the railway.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Do you mean the Esperance to Norseman line?

HON. M. L. MOSS: Either the Esperance to Norseman or the Coolgardie to Esperance. Neither is justified. I notice that the gold yield of Dundas for 1899 was something like 45,000ozs., and I am credibly informed that, during the preceding two, three, or four years, that yield has not much varied. There is little or no extra development going on; and, so far as I can see, the output does not justify the making of the railway. But whether it be the Esperance railway they are driving at, or a railway in other parts of the State, until we see the actual effects of federation, until we have the lines completed which the State is already pledged to construct, I think the policy announced by the Government—that they do not intend to construct other lines of railway—is the correct policy, the policy of caution, on which Mr. Lukin has put the hall-mark of approval. It is the policy of which I approve, and I shall do my best to prevent the expenditure of moneys on surveys of additional lines. We are told it is the intention of the Government to properly equip railway lines with rolling-stock. This is another matter which has been prominently before us during the past four or five years.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: It has been in every Governor's Speech.

HON. M. L. MOSS: In every Speech we see it continually, and frequently in the leaders of certain State newspapers; and it seems to be an evergreen subject

with every Government. I hope the present Administration will promptly and thoroughly equip existing lines. I am quite satisfied that this tremendous shortage of rolling-stock is proving very detrimental to the development of the State; it is very largely interfering with business; and, more than that, it has the effect of making the congestion in the harbour at Fremantle very much greater than it would be if the boats—I am now particularly referring to the sailing-boats coming here for timber—were able to get quicker despatch. Consequently, it is a matter of supreme importance to the country that this rolling-stock should be procured as quickly as possible. I understand from the remarks of the General Manager of Railways at some function the other evening, that there is a very large quantity of rolling-stock on order, and that when it reaches this country the railways will be able to conduct their business with more efficiency than at present.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: That was ordered by the previous Government.

HON. M. L. MOSS: So far as I am concerned, I do not care what Government ordered this rolling-stock. I want to see these lines put on such a good working basis that the business of the country may be properly conducted, that the merchants and others concerned in the railways being run to the best advantage shall not be delayed, and that business shall not have put in its way those impediments which, if the railways were properly equipped, would be obviated. While dealing, during last session, with the question of railways, I drew attention to the fact that the railway receipts were not subject to audit by the Auditor General, and I looked with some amount of curiosity through the Governor's Speech to see whether the present Government had any proposal to make regarding this extremely important matter. The total receipts of the State, according to the Auditor General's report for June, 1900, were £2,875,395 18s. 5d., and of that amount railway receipts were by far the largest item, the total of these being £1,256,812 4s.; and if hon. members care to turn to page 8 of that report and look upon the list, they will find that, leaving out the Customs returns—and I need only say in passing that Customs returns

will in the future be a matter of federal concern—railway receipts last year formed nearly half our revenue, and during the current year will bear a very much larger ratio to the total receipts which will come under the purview of the Auditor General than was the case up to the 30th June, 1900. And it is my contention that, if the Auditor General, who is the officer appointed by Parliament to carry out the important duties which devolve upon him in respect of the other public departments—if his inspection be necessary in the case of such departments, it is all the more necessary in dealing with the department which at present furnishes so large a portion of the revenue of the State, which portion will in future bear a much larger ratio to the whole revenue than it does at the present time. I notice, on turning to page 277 of the Auditor General's report, that some correspondence is set out as to inquiries made by various Ministers during the recess with regard to this important matter. I may pause for a moment to say that hon. members are of course aware that the railway accounts are at present audited by auditors employed by the Railway Department, in contradistinction to auditors employed by the Audit Department, these railway auditors being subordinate to the General Manager of Railways, the Chief Traffic Manager, the Chief Accountant, and a number of other departmental officers. In my opinion, the audit should be as free from influence as possible. Understand, I do not for a moment cast any aspersion against the General Manager of Railways or any other officer high in that service; but I think to make it a complete audit, to make it such an audit as will be satisfactory to the people of this country, it is desirable that the audit be conducted by the Auditor General, who is not in any way responsible to the Commissioner of Railways, the General Manager, or any other gentleman engaged in that department.

A MEMBER: Who audits the expenditure?

HON. M. L. MOSS: The audit of the expenditure does not assist us very much when we are dealing with receipts totalling over $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions of money. If that were an argument, where should we be landed when dealing with other departments, if we were to audit their expendi-

ture without auditing their receipts? In this correspondence, I see the then Premier (Sir John Forrest) wrote on the 8th December, 1900, as follows:—

During the debate on the Audit Estimates in the Legislative Assembly, the question of the Railway Accounts being audited by the Audit Department came up again for discussion. I shall be glad if you will bring the matter under the notice of the Auditor General, with a view to deciding whether it is possible to do more in the direction of auditing the receipts of money by the Railway Department than is at present done. 2. I understand that in regard to the question, every Expenditure Account submitted by the Railway Department is audited in the same way as accounts from all other Departments.

That is passed on to the Auditor General by the Under Secretary; and the former writes as follows:—

After mature consideration of this important question, I have arrived at the conclusion that it would be far preferable for my department to audit in detail the whole of the accounts connected with the Railways Department throughout the Colony, instead of as hitherto, the two departments, i.e., the Railways and Audit, performing a joint audit. Of course you will understand that in order to enable me to cope with the work required to be performed, it will necessitate an augmentation to my staff, or in other words, I may say that the officers attached to the Audit Branch of the Railways Department should be transferred and attached to my staff, when I would take the earliest opportunity of re-organising the staff under my control, with a view of enabling me to select trustworthy officers to discharge the duties. I may add, it appears to me that Parliament and the public will not be satisfied until my Department discharges the audit in question.

Then there is an extract from the railway estimates, showing salaries of audit clerks and audit inspectors.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: And then the postscript.

HON. M. L. MOSS: And then the postscript, that in view of the increased responsibility there should be increased pay. That is all right from the Auditor General's point of view; but it is not what I am now discussing. If extra work is to be thrown on that gentleman, I suppose he will be remunerated accordingly. But I want to call attention to the Chief Accountant's very lengthy minute on this question. He says:—

My opinion is that the proposed arrangement would not work satisfactorily. In expressing this conviction so emphatically I may say it has been formed after a very careful considera-

tion of the matter, and assisted by a long acquaintance of the exigencies of the business in question; also in support of my contention it will be, I think, a sound argument to advance that none of the Colonies have adopted such a system as is referred to.

It is no argument that because the other States have not done so we should still go on in the same blind way that we have been going. He further says :—

I believe I am right in my facts in stating that the New South Wales authorities, some years ago, considered the question of their Auditor General examining the detailed Revenue Statements as rendered by stations (independent of the Working Railways Department) and found it impracticable. I may also add that every Railway Department in the world (Government and Private) conducts its own internal Revenue Audit of Accounts, and to any person cognisant of the requirements, the reasons are manifold as well as obvious.

I will pause here to say that railway companies in England are mostly limited liability companies, and the auditors in such cases are the appointees of the shareholders; they are responsible to the shareholders in much the same way as the Auditor General is responsible to the Parliament and the people of the country, therefore, the answer that this is done by railway companies elsewhere is no argument in support of the system, because it is well known in the case of auditors of English railway companies that they are not appointed by the general manager for the time being, but when the annual meeting takes place the shareholders appoint their auditor who is responsible to the shareholders. The minute goes on :—

As you are aware, New South Wales is the only Australasian Colony which exercises an examination over the railway revenue accounts, and in that case it is only to the extent of having two or three travelling auditors attached to the Auditor General's branch, whose inspections of the accounts at the railway stations, about once a year, are accepted by the Railway Commissioners as equivalent to the audits made by the Commissioners' own examining officers.

I will say with regard to New South Wales that the management of the railways in that State are second to none in Australia, and there an independent audit in a moderate form has been adopted. If the Government of this State go that step they will do something to satisfy the demands which the public, or those interested in public affairs in this State,

are crying out for. If that be impracticable, then hand the whole of the railway audit officers over to the Audit Department, and if that be an expensive matter involving a larger cost, the work no doubt will justify, say, half a dozen of these travelling inspectors being handed over for the making of these investigations. I may remark here that there is some cause for alarm when we find the sort of thing which has come about in connection with the Ice Company's affairs, and we cannot help saying that with a proper system of audit these irregularities, and other irregularities, which I will not particularise, may not have occurred. Such things justify public men in demanding that a greater scrutiny be made in connection with a large department such as the railway department is. This report goes on to say :—

Assuming that the examination of the stations' detailed revenue accounts was transferred to the control of the Auditor General, it would be absolutely necessary for this Office to have cognisance of the returns for statistical and other purposes, and many of the statements would of necessity have to be duplicated to enable our tabulated returns to be compiled, and the checking carried out as it should be.

No one objects to that. If the public will gain greater security by the extra scrutiny of an additional audit, let the State bear the expense of duplicating certain accounts :—

Further, there is the important question of executive authority over the Railway Station staff to be considered. At the present time this Office issues thousands of inquiries and adjusting forms in connection with the different accounts, and station officers have to be frequently dealt with by the Chief Traffic Manager (as the controlling official) for carelessness or neglect, and are sometimes dismissed, reduced in position, fined, or cautioned. The Auditor General, it is patent, could not communicate with station officers under such circumstances, and as the correspondence, inquiries, etc., would in consequence be required to pass to and from the Auditor General through this Office, or *via* the offices of other heads of the Railway Branches, I feel sure I may say unhesitatingly that the business in connection with the enormous mass of details of the Railway Accounts could not, under such conditions, be conducted satisfactorily.

What is easier in a case like this, than the Auditor General or his officer on finding out any irregularities immediately reporting them to the head of the department, so that an officer guilty of a breach

of duty, or guilty of embezzling the funds of the department, could be dealt with. In dealing with the chief accountant's reply, I may say that is no reason for postponing this important matter. The report further says:—

It would speedily break down under the cumbrous details which could not be avoided; and I venture to express a further opinion that the cost of the proposed arrangement (i.e., admitting for the purpose of my contention that it was attempted to be carried out) would involve an expenditure of several thousands of pounds (sterling) per annum, and the advantages gained *nil*.

That is the opinion of the chief accountant. I do not know the gentleman who occupies the position, but I may say that if it does cost us several thousand pounds a year, then the cost would be justified. We cannot have too great a scrutiny over a department where the opportunities for irregularities are so great, and we have evidence of that already in this country. The report goes on to say:—

In dealing with the matter, I may be pardoned mentioning, in conclusion, that I have had over 20 years' experience of railway auditing in England, and may therefore claim to be fully aware of what is necessary in connection therewith.

I will dismiss that sentence by saying, if that gentleman who has had an experience of 20 years in railway auditing in England was there, he was an independent auditor and not the nominee of the general manager of the railway company he served with, not the nominee of the directors, but the nominee of the shareholders, and consequently the arguments he uses are of very little avail. Again the report says:—

Our present system of auditing has been built up upon this experience, and as I have, also, for several years held an important position in the Audit Department of the New South Wales Government Railways, and have had the privilege of looking over the systems of the Railways Audit Offices of Victoria and South Australia, I believe I am fully justified in expressing my conviction that we at present possess a system of audit at least equal to any in Australasia.

I have read that letter fully because I presume it was the case which has been made by the department to prevent this necessary reform being carried out. In my opinion no argument has been brought forward, but the letter is full of argument for the position which I have taken up. The auditors of the Railway Depart-

ment cannot doubt the fact that they are servants practically of the general manager of railways, and they have to scrutinise the operations of the Railway Department. In my belief the proper course to adopt is to turn over all the audit officers in the Railway Department, and make them officers of the Auditor General. I am firmly of opinion that this should be done, and if it be necessary to duplicate certain returns in consequence of this, I say the country should be prepared to pay for that work in having this reform. I am not going to weary the House by going through more correspondence further than to say that when Mr. Randell seems to think that members of Parliament are making more out of this question than there is any reason for, although I have the greatest regard and esteem for Mr. Randell, I am sorry that in this matter I must differ with him, and I think I do so on the best of grounds. It is not because in the other States they have not had sufficient "go," but have gone on in their happy-go-lucky style, that we should not go farther in this State and prevent any false security. I am satisfied that with a proper system of audit many of the irregularities in connection with the Railway Department would not have occurred. One word before I leave this question. In answer to an inquiry by the late Premier, the Auditor General tells us that no less than 31 employees are engaged on this work, at a cost of £4,780 per annum. The present staff attached to the Auditor General's office for the whole of the colony numbers 29, inclusive of himself and office-cleaner, at a cost of £5,597 18s. 4d. So that you see in connection with the railways we have an audit department with more hands employed than in the case of the Auditor General's Department, and the expenditure is much less. I think the Government should deal with the question, and that these officers should be put under the Auditor General's control: this would be in the best interests of the country and of the Railway Department. I have read with a great amount of interest the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the rabbit question, and I think the gentlemen comprising that commission are deserving of the best thanks of this country for having given the time that must have been occupied in carrying

out so important a matter. I am perfectly satisfied, and I am sure other members are also, on a perusal of the evidence taken before that Commission, that a real and serious danger threatens this country. It is perfectly certain that rabbits are existing in thousands, and according to some evidence they exist in millions in this country; but assuming that the "long bow" has been drawn in that evidence, we know that rabbits do exist in thousands in various parts of the State. The result will be that the agriculturists and pastoralists stand a fair show of the experience of the Eastern States being repeated here. Western Australia cannot stand the ravages that will be bound to occur if the rabbits get a great hold in the settled portions of the country. And, while I agree with the Commission that it is a rather serious thing that the fence which they advise the Government to erect should cut out good country which can be seen by reference to the map attached to the report of the Commission—it cuts out country east of Southern Cross and to the north of it, country which one has reason to think is good pastoral country—it is a matter of supreme importance to the country that steps should be taken without delay for the erection of a fence to prevent the rabbits getting into the more settled portions of this State. I notice that the Commission recommend that wire netting with $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. mesh should be erected, but I hope that so far as the Government are concerned they will adopt the suggestion of some of the gentlemen who gave evidence before the Commission and erect wire netting of $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. mesh. The evidence discloses clearly that rabbits in other parts of Australia have been known to get through $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. mesh; and if the country is to be put to the expense of erecting a fence, whilst the Government are doing this, it will be really lesser expense in the long run to erect a fence of wire netting with $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. mesh than to erect one of a larger mesh which would turn out of little avail. We are promised in the Speech a codification of the criminal law.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: The old cry.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The old cry, but one that demands immediate attention. On looking at the index which accompanies the statutes published in 1900, I

find under the heading of criminal law 78 statutes in force in this State.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: There are more than 78.

HON. M. L. MOSS: There are 78 shown in the index to the statutes published in 1900. It becomes a difficult matter even for an expert in criminal law such as the Hon. R. S. Haynes, to find out where he is. I notice that the Parliament of Queensland have passed in that State a code of criminal law which is embodied in some 707 sections, and which is, I believe, based on the code drawn by Sir James Stephen.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: By Sir Samuel Griffith.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I think that code is based on a Bill introduced in the House of Lords and passed in that House, but thrown out by the House of Commons. Sir Samuel Griffith took his code from that Bill, and now it is the law of Queensland, and has been for a number of years the law of New Zealand. I do not know whether the proposal of the Government is that in codifying this important branch of the law they intend to copy that code; but I should advise them, instead of trying new experiments on their own account, to take the law as it is in Queensland and New Zealand, where it has been in operation for a number of years, and they will find they have a suitable measure which will rid our statute book of a large number of statutes, and will put this branch of the law into something like form, so that persons obliged to act under it may be better able to understand what they are doing. We are told in the Speech that the Government are going to give a water supply to Perth and Fremantle. This is a very important matter to the province I represent, because the Fremantle water is at present so bad that in providing water for mail steamers we are obliged to get it from Perth; and I have been informed by gentlemen connected with the shipping business in this State that while in Melbourne water is supplied at 9d. per ton, the cost of bringing it from Perth and putting it into the mail steamers is 5s.; and in the case of Fremantle water, which is undrinkable, the cost is 1s. per ton. This country has done a great deal with the object of inducing the mail steamers

to make Fremantle their port of call ; but the delays which are taking place from time to time in connection with the coaling of large steamers—though I am pleased to say some improvement is being made—and the expense the steamers are put to in providing water, are becoming serious ; and these matters are serious, not only as regards mail steamers, but to the public at large. It is a necessity the public have a right to demand from Parliament, that a good wholesome supply of fresh water be provided. I hope the Government will do more than put into His Excellency's mouth the statement that this scheme is about to be undertaken. I hope that during the present session it will be made a proposal, that we shall have a definite scheme laid before us, so that this important matter may be dealt with at the first opportunity. There is nothing in this Speech referring either to prison reform or to improving lunatic asylums in the State ; and surely my friend Dr. Jameson is not going to remain a member of any Administration which will keep our lunatic asylums in their present state. I am sure it is a disgrace to our humanity that such a place as the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum should exist in the year 1901. I have been to that institution once only, and have no desire to go to it again. It is a perfect disgrace to the country that for so many years such an injustice should have been done to persons who, unhappily, have to be kept there under restraint. There is no attempt at classification ; under the conditions obtaining in the institution no attempt can be made to cure the patients ; and to go to the asylum once is, I think, quite sufficient to justify the condemnation of those who have been responsible, during so many years, for the existence of an institution of that kind. I hope Dr. Jameson, who I know has strong views on this point, will bring it promptly before the Government, so that steps may be taken to rectify what I think is a disgrace and a scandal. And may I be permitted to say that in making a change with regard to the location of the asylum, we shall be acting wrongly if it be transferred to Whitby Falls. I am sure better sites can be obtained nearer the centres of population ; and in reading the report of Drs. Davy and Tratman—and I may

say that report was a valuable contribution to the literature affecting lunatic asylums in this State—it will be found they also are of opinion that, by putting the asylum at that distance from Perth and Fremantle, a great wrong will be done, and that Whitby Falls is not a proper site for such an institution. I notice, on perusing the report on gaols for 1900, that the superintendent of the Fremantle Prison, Mr. George, draws attention to the delays which have taken place in providing the necessary funds for erecting workshops and the purchase of tools and equipments for the purpose of making the prison a more remunerative institution, and for providing necessary work for prisoners detained within its walls. No doubt it is fresh within the memory of most hon. members that a commission was sitting some time ago in connection with the working of that institution ; many recommendations were made, and I believe the outcome of those recommendations is the alterations going on within the walls of that prison. Now I hope that Dr. Jameson, who worthily and with distinction filled the position of chairman of that commission, will do his best to bring about some of the reforms which he then advocated. I desire, however, to make a complaint. During last session, I asked the Colonial Secretary whether regulations in accordance with the recommendations of that commission had been made, to supersede the then existing regulations, the regulations which up to the present time remain in force ; and I received the answer from the Colonial Secretary that those regulations had been drafted, but through delay in the Crown Law Office the regulations had not yet been gazetted, though he would do what he could to get them brought into force. Yet here we are to-day, in July, 1901, as far forward as we were when I asked that question. If these regulations have been approved by the Minister in charge of that department, and if they have remained in the Crown Law Department all this time, then I say it is a disgrace ; because one has only to read the present regulations to see how inapplicable they are to the present circumstances of the State. The ticket-of-leave regulations now in force are a perfect disgrace ; because a man liberated from prison under a ticket-of-leave cannot be employed

save under a written agreement, as in the old convict days. [A MEMBER: No.] That may be done away with: I do not know. Mr. George says: "I desire again to emphasise the need for the issue of a new set of gaol regulations to supersede the present code." If Mr. George is referring to the regulations in existence when Dr. Jameson and myself sat on the Penal Commission, all I can say is, the delay is inexcusable.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: They have not been altered.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I hope the present Government will see who is responsible for this delay, and will do what is right and proper, and have these old regulations revoked, and new ones brought into force. During the recess, Mr. Pennefather was elevated to the bench as an acting Judge. It became necessary to fill the position of Attorney General, and a friend of mine, Mr. Sayer, was appointed to that position. Now, in my judgment it is extremely bad policy to go to the civil service to fill up Cabinet appointments. I think the civil service should be kept as free as possible from all political influence. I have no objection at all to Mr. Sayer; I regard him as a lawyer of great capacity; I believe him to be a gentleman of ability and an honourable man; but I say the principle involved in his appointment is bad. I think the members of the civil service under this State should be altogether independent of politics; and the Ministry of the day erred very much in going to the civil service to make that appointment. During the last session of Parliament, the Hon. F. M. Stone moved a motion objecting to trials for serious offences taking place before unqualified men; and it now appears from the answer to a question put by Mr. McLarty, that certain natives are about to be tried for their lives by the resident magistrate at Derby. I said on the night Mr. Stone spoke, and others supported me, that it was wrong that any man, black or white, should be tried for his life by a gentleman not well versed in the rules of evidence. [A MEMBER: Hear, hear.] And I hope this Government will revoke the commission referred to by Mr. McLarty, and will send some professional man even all the way to Derby, for the purpose of holding the court, so that these prisoners may be tried in such

a manner as to afford a reasonable certainty that no evidence will be admitted which would not be allowed in the Supreme Court, Perth. And while I am on that point, I desire to say again that the whole system in these Courts of Quarter Sessions is as bad as can be. I do not wish to make a serious reflection upon Mr. Maitland Brown, the chairman of Quarter Sessions at Geraldton, but I say the sentence of 10 years imposed on that man Pascoe is the greatest disgrace that ever occurred in this country. The Government have reduced it to three years, and I think that fact is ample evidence that they must have been perfectly staggered at it. How long that sort of thing is going to continue we cannot say; and undesirous as I am of bringing into this House matters relating to the administration of justice, which are better kept out of it, I think that young boy—[A MEMBER: Not a boy]—well, a young man: I think his case might well have been met with a shorter sentence than three years. Both of these sentences seem to me to be absolutely disgraceful, and that fact was recognised by the late Government. They immediately cut the sentence down from 10 to three years. There was a public clamour about that man and his boy. But how many cases are there when this public clamour does not arise, cases to which the attention of the Government has not been called; the result being—I have had personal experience of this, and so has Dr. Jameson—that sentences up to as many as five years have been imposed for trivial offences which would have been sufficiently punished, and where the law would have been sufficiently vindicated, by the imposition of six months' imprisonment.

HON. G. RANDELL: Imposed by Judges.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Not by Judges, but at quarter sessions. I notice that Mr. George in his report says, referring to the period covered by his report:—

The period commenced with the number of inmates standing at 305, which rose by the 23th June last to 335. Since that day the numbers have shown a steady decline, the lowest point being reached at 230 on the 13th instant. I am disposed to account for a large measure of this decline by the fact that, though the commitments have increased during the

last two years, the sentences, on the average, have been of shorter duration.

I am glad that is the case; one of the things the Penal Commission pointed out was that the sentences are too long, and I am glad to think that the sentences are now moderate. It should be the aim in punishing to make the sentences short and severe, and not make the gaols appear the home of the criminals who have to be kept at such a great expense. I hope the Government are going to provide us with a Judge to go on circuit; they are going to try and prevent the Quarter Sessions Courts being presided over by unprofessional men, and I hope we shall get a promise that in regard to the natives, we shall have professional gentlemen to try this class of offenders in capital cases.

HON. D. McLARTY: They have been waiting for trial six months now.

HON. M. L. MOSS: In my opinion I think the Government should immediately bring in a measure to amend the Companies Act. In this State we have a very large number of companies which are foreign companies within the meaning of the Companies Act; I mean companies incorporated outside Western Australia. I believe that the business community in this country, in fact I do not believe it but I know it, are running a serious risk in regard to the condition of the Companies Act at the present time. This matter has been brought prominently under my notice recently in connection with a large company, the Standard Exploration Company. That company has got credit amongst merchants for over twelve thousand pounds, and one fine morning the creditors in Perth and Fremantle learned that the company had got a winding-up order made against it. Creditors in this State were in great jeopardy of being put on the same footing as the creditors in England, and only by fortuitous circumstances they got their claims paid in full. But I will not detain the House on that point. I want to bring under the notice of the Government that in Victoria and Queensland the local debts of a company are made a first charge against the local assets. I believe that could be done in this country without shaking the confidence of the English investor, which we are all so desirous of retaining, and it would put

the people in Western Australia on a much better footing than they are at present. The liabilities generally speaking are expenses which have been incurred in connection with the general development of a mine, and I think the large creditors of a company are worthy the consideration of Parliament. In my experience, and in the experience of other legal men, when a company begins to get into difficulties, it begins to flood the country with debentures to the extent of thousands of pounds, and what "show" have people here against the people in England? This is a matter which no private member should take up; it demands the immediate attention of the Government.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: How would you amend it?

HON. M. L. MOSS: I would make the local debts a first charge on the local assets. In many instances there are two winding-up orders going on simultaneously, one in England and one here, against a company, and the people here have a right to demand that Parliament should protect the people in the country, seeing that the bulk of the liabilities are incurred for the development of the mine. People who hold debentures as part of the purchase money of a mine have no reasonable complaint if the money is spent in the development of the property. We should not let the people of the country be swindled, which will be the case unless there is an amendment of the law made in the near future. We are promised by the Government the establishment of a harbour trust. I do not know whether it is in the Speech or not, but the Premier has been very profuse in his promise in regard to this matter. I make this statement, that the present divided control of the harbour arrangements at Fremantle is operating to the very great detriment of the business of the country. The berthing of the boats, the locating of the boats, and the control of the jetties, rest with the Harbour Department, while the management of the wharves, and what is called the "farm" and the sheds are under the control of the Railway Department. Not only that, but the heads of these two departments are located in Perth, and if they were located in Fremantle still there would be great difficulties. There would be no one there who would take such a degree of responsi-

bility on his shoulders that he could deal with these matters of concern as they crop up, affecting as they do the mercantile community, therefore they affect the State as a whole. This matter should not be deferred beyond this session. The Government should bring down a measure dealing with the matter, and a harbour board when constituted should be fairly representative of the mercantile bodies. I am not going to say the Government should not have some representation on the board, but we should have some body in Fremantle ready to deal with every question as it crops up. We should certainly do away with the anomaly of having one part of the business controlled by the Harbour Department and the other part by the Railway Department officials, the heads of both departments being 12 miles away. Through these departments the whole of the commerce of the country filters, and the whole matter is operating to the worst interests of the country. As far as I am concerned, the Ministry have a very ardent supporter indeed in bringing about a reform of this kind. It should not be delayed for another session of Parliament. No measure is more pressing, or demands the attention of both Houses more urgently, than the matter of creating a harbour board or trust dealing with the wharves and harbour at Fremantle. I would not say that the Perth Chamber of Commerce should not have a representative on the board, but I cannot deal with details. I shall be glad to go into the matter when the Bill is before us, but somebody having some responsibility should be stationed at Fremantle who could deal with the questions as they arise and not let them be referred to the General Manager of Railways, or those controlling the harbour department. This dual control is productive of great inconvenience. A port which has grown as Fremantle has should necessarily be put on the same footing as the port of Adelaide or the port of Melbourne, and the other great ports of Australia. A postponement of this matter will only operate to the detriment of the country at large. The late Colonial Secretary stated in reply to an observation I made last session that the Government intended to amend the Stamp Act providing for the proper collection of stamp duties. I do not know whether it can be done by an

amendment of the law or the regulations. I am inclined to think that the law will have to be amended, but the present method of collecting the duties under the Stamp Act deprives the country of a large amount of revenue which it should have. This is a matter which also demands the immediate attention of the Government. The Stamp Act should be amended and officers appointed in various parts of the State where all instruments liable to stamp duty could be presented for the payment of the duty within a certain time, and there the documents could be stamped with embossed or adhesive stamps by the officer in charge. I am not going into the details of this matter. At the present time the Government say they want all the revenue they can get. I present them with this advice, and they will find a large amount of stamp duty collected after such an amendment of the Act is made. I have sufficiently detained the House that I do not think I will take up the time longer, but I will say again that as far as the Government are concerned, while measures are brought forward to promote the best interests of the country and while their measures will bring about that end, they may expect from me loyal support, but so soon as the Government are not actuated by that desire, or, if actuated by that desire, in my opinion do not deserve it, even in this non-party House they will find that I am a bit of an obstructionist, and that I will not give them that loyal support which I have promised. While the Government go on with the business of the House, removed as we are from party considerations, I think we ought to give them that fair trial their accession to office entitles them to.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan) : I am sorry that no other member has risen to address the House on the Speech which has been delivered to us by His Excellency the Governor. I did not intend to speak at such an early period of the debate, and I am not quite prepared to address the House now. I, however, join in the expression of sympathy already expressed by Mr. Moss in regard to Her late Majesty, our revered Queen, and also to the expressions of loyalty which he has given utterance to in regard to the accession of King Edward VII. I am not quite sure yet

about the fourth paragraph. I have not made up my mind on that matter. I think it is desirable not to say too much at the present moment on the subject. So far as I can gather from my reading, I am afraid this State is going to suffer, perhaps quite as much as I anticipated when the question was so hotly debated throughout this country as to whether we should join the federation or not. With other members, I hope the deliberations of the Federal Government will be such as not to inflict any injury upon us, but I must say that the indications in the debates of the Federal Parliament are somewhat troublesome to those living in this State, as to how we shall fare at the hands of the Government, and at the hands of the representatives of other federated States. As far as I can gather, there does not seem to be an expression of any great desire to give us one of the sops held out to us when we joined the Commonwealth, namely, the transcontinental railway. I, however, hope that when they are possessed of better information, and look the question fairly and squarely in the face, there may be many converts to the construction of that line by the Federal Government. In this morning's paper I saw an apparently optimistic view taken of the subject by the General Manager of Railways, in which he ventured the statement that he believed that railway would pay from the start. Of course I know that many people here as well as in other parts of the world, do not share that opinion; but I am pleased to see that a gentleman who has a great knowledge of the expenditure likely to be incurred and the revenue likely to be derived, is able to express himself so strongly, and also that a leading newspaper of the State seems to think that perhaps he has spoken from good information, information that may be relied upon, and that the question from this day onward assumes a more favourable aspect. Let us hope such is the case. No doubt the construction of the railway to South Australia would be a vast benefit to this State; at any rate, it was one of the reasons given to us on all sides why we should federate with the Eastern colonies, and thus make Fremantle, as it were, the point of arrival and of departure for the whole of

Australia. Though I have every desire that this Government should have ample opportunity to show what they can do in managing the affairs of the country, I am sorry to see at the very outset that the Ministry are confronted by a very difficult question—a question which seems to be growing, but which I hope will, in the very near future, indeed in the course of a few hours, be so altered as to remove from the minds of persons in business, and others, a feeling that considerable trouble and difficulty have arisen. I am referring to the strike of a few men at Fremantle, which seems to have unsettled the minds of a great many other workers. The Government have here a very difficult matter to deal with, and I trust they will receive on this question the hearty support of the members of this House and of the thinking portion—especially the trading portion—of the community. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] My own opinion about the matter—and I have no hesitation in stating it—is that the offer made by the Commissioner of Railways was reasonable and fair, and should have been at once accepted by the men, when he stated he was considering the question of reclassification, and proposed that if any increases were granted, the men on strike should partake of the increases as from the 1st of last month. It seems to me that was a very fair offer, and I think it desirable that persons of influence, and men who have the good of the country at heart, should be willing to express themselves on this question. The difficulty of carrying on the business of the country is being much increased; and it is desirable that the law-abiding portion of the community, and those who wish for the progress of the country, should assist the Government in a matter of this sort as far as they possibly can. It may be right that the men should receive an increase of wages for the work they perform; but when they “throw down their tools,” as someone has expressed it, or come at the point of the bayonet and demand from the Government of the day a certain concession, then I think that we should go to the Government and say: “No; we will take this matter into careful consideration, decide what rate of wages we shall give you, and you shall participate in any advantages which are given after full and careful consideration of the matter,

from the time you have made the request." It seems to me that is a very fair offer on the part of the Commissioner of Railways; and I am glad to see that he, and as far as I can ascertain at present the Government, have the backbone to abide by the offer he then made to the men. I trust that wiser counsels will prevail. I saw to-day in a newspaper that one person who, I think, represents these men, was much dissatisfied at the interview with the Commissioner of Railways, and went so far as to say—I think in so many words—that on behalf of the men he was not prepared to accept, I think, the further terms, a slightly increased payment, which were offered. Now it seems to me altogether wrong that men should allow themselves to be led by such persons, who are to a very large extent irresponsible, who are indifferent and careless as to the progress and advancement of the State, who are not able to look at such a question from a broad standpoint and with a desire to maintain peace. I am quite sure the Government of the day, as indeed I think they cannot help doing from pressure of public opinion, will treat the public servants with justice, and give them their rights. I feel sure any Government will do so, and that, if injustice be brought to their notice, they will, at the earliest possible opportunity, devote their attention to obtaining an understanding of the full merits of the case, and dealing with it accordingly; and I earnestly trust we shall have public opinion in this State with the Minister in the position he has taken up in regard to these railway servants. The difficulty arises from the fact that the Government of the day is a very large employer of labour. I have always held and expressed the opinion, not only in Parliament but in public and in private, that there is to-day too much work done under departmental supervision; and notwithstanding what may be said by some of the chief officials of the Public Works Department, I think it much better for the Government to carry on such works by contract, and not to have to deal with bodies of men, but leave them to be dealt with by the contractor.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: In this case you could not.

HON. M. L. MOSS: You would have just as bad a difficulty.

HON. G. RANDELL: No; I do not think so.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Yes; you would.

HON. G. RANDELL: It is stated there is economy in the construction of public works by day labour, but I have reason to believe such is not the case. I believe in the Government employing certain labour; but the tendency at the present moment, under pressure from unions, associations, and large bodies of workers, is to go farther still and to have all public works executed by day labour. From my own observation and experience, which I have exercised very considerably on some public works in the State, I am satisfied the Government do not, as a rule, get the same day's work from the men as does the contractor; and the Government should, as far as possible, leave the construction of railways, and the shifting of cargoes at Fremantle, to private employers. Of course, there may be some difficulty in allowing contractors to do such work. But, allowing that some things are necessary to be done by day labour under the direct personal superintendence of the departmental officials, the fact remains that a very large number of works might be carried on by contract in preference to day labour. I have seen such things about the city, and in other places, as convince me, or I would not thus speak, that the Government do not get from men the same amount of work in the day—I repeat, the same amount of work—as a contractor would get; and it would be much better for the State to let the contractor have the trouble of dealing with these men than for the Government to involve themselves in the political troubles and difficulties which follow. A great deal more might be said about this, but no doubt it will come up later on. At the same time, I would express my sympathy with the Government at the present moment, who are being placed, almost immediately they get into office, in this unpleasant and difficult position; and I trust we shall soon see wiser counsels prevail amongst the workers.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: They have brought it upon themselves.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am afraid these counsels will not prevail amongst the leaders, if they can have their way; but I trust the men will return to their

work, and that the difficulty will be over; for my own opinion is that the offer made to the men is fair and reasonable, and I think they should have accepted it immediately. I do not propose to say a great deal on the Governor's Speech. Mr. Moss, who has just sat down, has criticised it favourably, largely, and fully. He has expressed sentiments with regard to it which exist in my own mind, and I am sure many other members will join with me in endeavouring to assist the Government to the best of our ability so long as they bring in measures which commend themselves to our judgment as being in the best interests of the State. I regret to see that the Government—although I believe the majority of the people are in favour of their proposal—have decided as they have done with regard to the admission of fruit into this State. Except on a very small scale I am not a fruit-grower, and therefore this does not affect me personally; and I should have been quite content if the regulations had been retained until orchards which had been recently planted had arrived at some maturity, so that people could get their produce into the market and obtain some return. But I fear that the inspection of fruit in the Eastern States will be a farce. I believe the inspection which takes place of shipments to England is in every way defective, and that objection is being taken in England to apples exported to that country from the Eastern States. Whether the codlin moth will breed in England I do not know, but apparently English interests are taking alarm and are afraid of the danger. I have been told that there is no question that if fruit be admitted at all to our ports—hon. members will understand that I am still in favour of prohibition—if fruit be admitted at all, even if inspection take place at the port of shipment and at the port of discharge, in less than five years the codlin moth will be in this country. This expression of opinion comes from some who have had experience of the codlin moth in the Eastern States. It is the opinion of one gentleman who has been driven out of Queensland and now has an orchard here; and it appears his ill-fortune has pursued him again by reason of the action of the Government in this respect.

We might have waited another year or two to see whether the progress stated to have been made in the planting of lands with fruit would be sufficient to supply the public wants. I agree that it is hard on the goldfields and other places that the price of apples should be so high; but remember that prices rise when the article is scarce.

At 6:30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.

At 7:45, Chair resumed.

HON. G. RANDELL (continuing): I was proceeding to make a few remarks on the question of the importation of apples, when the House adjourned. I had expressed myself that I had been surprised, if not startled, by the expressions of opinion which had fallen from Mr. Lukin, and I began to question whether I had got the right impression on my mind as to importation without restriction —

HON. H. LUKIN: Not without restriction.

HON. G. RANDELL: Inasmuch as the hon. member has been engaged in agricultural operations all his lifetime, and as I think he is a worthy representative of the gentlemen who have established themselves on the land with a view of producing "corn and wine and oil" and other necessities of life, as well as fruits, I would like to say that I have some diffidence in referring to the question of apples, because I know that a large majority of the people are in favour of having them introduced under a system of inspection, but not prohibited. The cry has been raised that the supply would soon overtake the demand, and I think the people of the colony, especially those who have arrived lately, are engaging in that occupation; they have purchased land, and are now planting their orchards. I maintain the people have not had a fair and reasonable trial, notwithstanding what has been asserted about the inconvenience that large numbers of people have been put to in having to pay a high price for so excellent and useful a fruit. I think the Government might have exercised a little more caution before revoking the rules. A large number of members of Parliament assembled together, I understand, and have come

to an arrangement that they will vote for the doing away of the prohibition on fruit. It will be a great hardship to find, after the lapse of a few years, that the orchards which have been planted have become useless.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: They have not in the other colonies.

HON. G. RANDELL: We have enough pests, and we do not want the pests which are not indigenous to this State brought here. Therefore I think the Government should be careful before they remove that prohibition which the fruit-growers have enjoyed hitherto. I most heartily concur in the principle adopted by the late Government in placing the prohibition on the importation of fruit for fear of destroying the orchards and ruining the orchardists. The new Government have decided to remove the prohibition, and they will have to take the consequences.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: The orchardists will have to take the consequences.

HON. G. RANDELL: The Government will have to take the political consequences. It would have been much better if the Government had remained on the safe side. I think Mr. Lukin, in his heart of hearts, is of that opinion: perhaps he may have received a mandate from his constituents in the direction he has spoken. I will say no more on the subject at the present time. I regret having to speak in this way because of the knowledge I have of the imposition which has been practised on the general consumer, by the middlemen, not the grower. Mr. Piesse may address himself to this subject, and he can speak with greater authority on the matter. I congratulate the Government on the manner in which they have spoken of their predecessors, and indorse cordially the sentiments which were expressed. The Governor speaks of having to deal with another set of advisers, and he says:

Whilst I thank the latter gentlemen for their past services, I trust that my present advisers will prove themselves as capable as their predecessors of controlling the destinies of the State, and of promoting the interests of our community.

I most heartily indorse that sentiment so nicely and kindly expressed towards their predecessors by the Government. I am very much in harmony with Mr. Moss, who has spoken with reference

to the surveys of railways which it is not proposed to construct. I cannot help thinking that the ninth paragraph is not the best specimen of English which might have been penned by the Government: in fact it is illogical. The Speech says:—

The construction of no new railways will be proposed to you during this session, though the expediency of surveys for additional lines will be submitted for your consideration. Such lines, when constructed, will form part of the great trunk system of State railways, and data to be acquired by these surveys will at all times be useful for the guidance of Parliament.

I lay stress on the remark "no new railways will be proposed to you during this session." Then again, "such lines." What lines? Because the Government have already said that they will not construct any lines of railway, yet "such lines when constructed will form part of the great trunk system of State railways." I think it is an illogical paragraph. No doubt it is intended that there shall be no new railways during the Government's term of office. One might be critical, and say that the Government propose to stand still, that they are counting on the State making no progress, and therefore no more new public works are required. I maintain that is the principle on which they are taking a stand, but they will have some difficulty in carrying it out. Already there are indications on the part of the people residing on the Mount Magnet goldfield that they want a railway for that apparently rich district, I mean rich in gold, and they will be knocking at the door of the Cabinet very early for the extension of the railway from Mount Malcolm. I do not know whether it was wise of the Government to have stated to the country that no new railways would be constructed whatever the circumstances of the State and the developments which may take place. I am of the same opinion as Mr. Moss, but it may be that the Government have made up their mind that during their term of office, for the next three years, no new works are to be commenced: if so, it is no good making surveys.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: This session.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am in harmony with the Government in exercising a spirit of caution, extreme caution it may be,

not to make lines until the Government are fully assured the railways are needed; but to tell us they are not going to make new lines without giving us any reasons, and then to say they are going to have surveys made, I think makes the position very illogical. I am pleased to see that the new Government are determined to carry out the works which have been initiated by the preceding Government, and I think they are doing wisely in that. There are some big schemes to be finished; there are the Harbour Works at Fremantle and the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Yielding to the force of circumstances, I take it they have been wise to say that they will carry on the big works which have been commenced.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: And the little ones.

HON. G. RANDELL: I think if we read between the lines there may be some small works which they think are not necessary, and those will not be carried out. The Speech says:—

Such works as the Coolgardie Water Scheme, the Fremantle Harbour Works, Railways, and other works in course of construction, will be completed with all due despatch consistent with the raising of necessary funds for the purpose.

I have no doubt if the money market in England had been in a better condition than it has been for the last two years, the Government which recently left office would have carried out the works to a much larger extent than they did; but they found themselves blocked to a certain degree from going to the money market in consequence of the price they would have to pay for their loans. When we get down to something like £90, I think it is rather a heavy price to pay.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Some loans were raised at £104.

HON. G. RANDELL: Yes; we were paying five per cent. for some loans then. I know there have been complaints in the London money market for some time that the Australian States were getting loans too cheaply, and there has been a combination of capitalists to raise the price to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. When we have reproductive works such as railways and harbour works we are justified in borrowing money at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., but I do not want the loans to get down as low as 90. That is too low, although I am told that

a three per cent. loan at 94 is better than a loan at par at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; that is with thirty years to run. I am not a financier, but I may say that I know that was the difficulty that faced the Forrest Government, and they were to a large extent prevented from going to the money market to the extent they would have done to enable them to carry on works at a greater rate: the price they would have to pay for the money stopped us. It has been suggested by Mr. Moss that there should be a board established, a harbour trust he called it, for the control of the harbour at Fremantle, and that such trust should have under its entire control not only the harbour itself, but the river, the wharves, and to a certain extent the railways. It is, however, proposed by the Government that we shall have a board consisting of responsible and experienced men to report to Parliament on the necessity of any public work. Well, as we know, this matter has several times been mentioned. I believe there are a great many difficulties in the way of establishing that board. At the same time, we must remember that, in constituting it, Parliament would be giving up, to a great extent, its independence. True, we could depart from the recommendations of the board, but we should do so under a great disadvantage and the liability to be charged with recklessness.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Parliament will never consent to do so.

HON. G. RANDELL: I think not. Parliament will still take the responsibility of deciding on such works as are to be carried out. I think that is the best principle, too, and, as Mr. Hackett has said, I do not think Parliament will give up its control over their construction. The argument is that we should remove such enterprises from political influence. My desire is to remove the railways from political influence by the appointment of a board of commissioners, or of a commissioner, to administer that very important department, quite free from any political influence that may be brought to bear. I am sorry to see in this connection a good deal of yielding—I was about to say to popular clamour—on the part of gentlemen seeking the suffrages of the electors; and I certainly was amused, during the late elections

both for the Federal and State Parliaments, to see that candidates were willing to promise anything and everything for the purpose of getting a seat in Parliament, thus, as we now find, placing themselves in very difficult positions.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: They will hop out of them.

HON. G. RANDELL: I hope that in time to come the great mass of the people will realise that the best candidates are not those who are ready to promise everything that will meet the wishes, whether right or wrong, of the electors, but will see that the persons elected to represent them in the Parliament of the country are men of backbone, men of high principle, men of honour, men who mean what they say when they make promises, and who will keep their promises when they attain power. I quite agree with the statement in the Speech that the Minister for Lands (Hon. C. Sommers) takes his seat in this House, "where he will be in touch with the majority of the gentlemen who so well represent the great agricultural interests." [Hon. J. W. HACKETT: Hear, hear.] And I desire at this stage to congratulate the Minister on having been selected by the Premier to co-operate in forming the Ministry of the day. I think it an excellent thing that the hon. member has been appointed Minister for Lands. In this House, many of the members do represent the landed interests in various forms; some as owners of house property, some as owners of large areas of land, and others as being engaged in enterprises more or less connected with the land; and I experienced largely in past sessions the necessity of having some acquaintance with land legislation and the land laws of the State, and also with the work of those who are cultivating the lands, and with their needs and requirements. I believe the Minister has had some acquaintance with such matters, both prior to coming to this State and since he has been here, and intends to take considerable interest in the cultivation of the soil; and I think it an excellent thing to place the head of the important Department of Lands in this House, where he will be face to face with hon. members who know a great deal about the subjects which, from time to time, come before him. I have been the means of introducing some land legis-

lation in this House, when the eloquence of Mr. Burges has overwhelmed me; and not only that, Mr. Burges has defeated the measure I have introduced, and I have almost felt ashamed of the Bill after the hon. member's strong remarks. Therefore I think it is a most fortunate circumstance that the Minister for Lands is in this House, which so strongly represents the agricultural interests of the State. Mr. Moss, in his able speech to-night, touched on several important questions; especially one in connection with Mr. Connelly's remarks with reference to the difficulty in which he was placed during his election campaign by having new rolls issued just before the polling day. Well, it is very desirable to avoid that, if possible, and its prevention will be a matter of little difficulty. But I do hope the Government will be very careful how they amend the Constitution Act, which, when introduced to Parliament, was considered to be a very excellent measure, and I may say was framed upon the Act of South Australia. But since our Act was passed in this House I have ascertained that some very important difficulties exist with regard to certain clauses of the South Australian Act which were entirely omitted from ours; and this omission to a large extent ties the hands of the officer who has to deal with electoral matters, and gives him, I must say, an immense amount of trouble in administering the Act. There are indeed some things which require amendment, and I have not the slightest doubt the difficulties complained of have arisen simply because the whole of the South Australian Act was not adopted by the Parliament of this country. With regard to electors' rights and plural voting I have not very much to say, though I still think, as I have always held, that plural voting in a State like this should be admissible, especially in isolated districts like the Kimberleys, and in other northern constituencies. Some men have large interests in such districts, although they do not reside there; and therefore, while to a very large extent admitting that population should be represented, I take it that we cannot, in the circumstances of this State, entirely ignore interests. Although it may be said that we do not want sheep, cattle, horses, or land, but people only, to be

represented in the House, yet we know the value of those interests to the State; and I think, when electing a member for a constituency like, say, East or West Kimberley, persons not residing in the district and having a vote, say, for the city of Perth or the town of Fremantle, should also be permitted to vote for the districts in which their interests are located. I think, if hon. members will look at that side of the question, they will see some reason, at all events, for retaining plural voting here for some time longer yet; there will be great difficulty in so adjusting the various electorates as to give equal representation to each district; and the principle which has hitherto prevailed will have to prevail, in my opinion, for some time to come. With regard to the statements made in the Speech in respect of large Excess Bills which have been presented to Parliament, and as to the care which must be taken in future to avoid unauthorised expenditure, no doubt the intention is very good, and I believe it was the intention of the late Government not to exceed their powers. But in a State that is progressing, in some respects by leaps and bounds, and in which circumstances are changing from day to day, the late Government found that it became necessary to make grants and incur expenditure in certain directions which had not been anticipated when Parliament was sitting; and I think no Ministry would be deserving of the name who would not take upon themselves the responsibility which such exigencies involve, and grant funds from the public purse for the purpose of carrying out important projects. For instance, during the year it often happens—perhaps immediately after the rising of Parliament—that a district makes application for the first time for a school. The residents prove “up to the hilt,” as one hon. member is very fond of saying—they prove satisfactorily, at any rate—that there is a need for a school to be erected and a teacher appointed. Now, what Government would for a moment be supported who refused to grant this small request, because they had to incur the responsibility of getting parliamentary sanction afterwards? I think it is the duty of the Government to make any such justifiable grant, whether it be a post-office, a telegraph line, or any similar

work, which it becomes, on short notice, desirable to construct. Many such contingencies arise during the year, and I am quite sure that the present Ministry, with the expressed intention of keeping within the expenditure authorised by Parliament, will very often find themselves under a pressing necessity to sanction many items of unauthorised expenditure, both large and small. In fact, I may say the Ministry admit this on the second page of the printed Speech :

Provision must necessarily be made for unforeseen expenditure, but Excess Bills need not include sums of such magnitude as those mentioned in Bills proposed during the last Parliament.

It is only a question of degree; and the Ministry of the day must use their discretion and afterwards account to Parliament for the action taken; and I believe that hitherto the Government have always been able satisfactorily to account to Parliament for unauthorised expenditure incurred during the recess. At any rate, I hope the present Ministry will not be afraid to meet the responsibility, but will take such a course if it become necessary. On the question of rabbits I have little to say. It is only within a short time that the imminence of the danger has become so accentuated. When one reads about millions of rabbits having found their way into the State, one is a little sceptical. There is no doubt that rabbits have arrived, and that probably they will progress, though it was at one time considered that the nature of the country between the Eastern Gold-fields and the border of South Australia was such that they were unlikely to make their way into our settled districts. Apparently they have done so, probably in a good season for their incursion, I think the failure to check their advance arose to a very large extent from lack of funds, and also from the opposite opinions expressed from time to time in the newspapers and elsewhere by different persons who appeared to be experts. One of them stated that fencing was of no use whatever; another told us it was the only remedy; and so the Government of the day were perplexed as to what was best to be done.

A MEMBER: The late Government never intended to do anything.

HON. G. RANDELL: The lack of funds was, I think, the principal fact which prevented the Government from taking action. It was a serious matter to carry a fence right across Western Australia to exclude rabbits. It is to be hoped their progress will be arrested, as, if they reach the settled districts, a very serious evil will undoubtedly result. It will then become the duty of landowners to fence in their properties so as to prevent the injury which will otherwise accrue. I am sure members will agree with this expression of opinion:

To settle people on the soil and encourage good feeling between the consumers on the goldfields and the producers in the coastal districts will be the aim of my Ministers.

That should be the aim of every Ministry, and I believe that has been the aim all along. With regard to the encouragement of immigration, there is a very difficult problem before the present Ministry as to how to secure labour if we are to be limited, as is the desire of some people, to the islands of Great Britain for obtaining agricultural labour. I had to deal with this subject just before I left office, having been requested by the late Premier (Mr. Throssell) to obtain information and to give my opinion upon it, and I was forced to the conclusion that the introduction of immigrants from Great Britain was almost impossible. At the present moment agricultural labour is leaving the farms and rural parts of England and settling in the towns, and labour for the farms of England is scarce at present, therefore we must look in other directions for the immigration necessary to enable farmers to cultivate the soil here. That this is a pressing question any one acquainted with the subject must know. One gentleman told me that he could have put a large acreage under cultivation this year, only that it was impossible for him to get the labour. Mr. Cowen, of the Agricultural Department, informed me that we should have to look to Scandinavia, to Finland, Northern Italy, and a few other places for desirable immigrants. I concur with him heartily, and Mr. Cowan mentioned certain parts from which it was not desirable to obtain immigrants. To attempt to introduce labour from the other States by systematic measures

would no doubt provoke a hostile spirit on the part of the statesmen and people of the other States. I have been asked to try and get domestic servants from the other States, but I have always refused to do so. I have thought that it would be an unkind and unneighbourly act on the part of the people of this State to induce people to leave the other States and come to this one, but private individuals can take what steps they think necessary for the introduction of such persons to this State from the other States. I might mention to hon. members that there is a large influx of a desirable class of people coming here under the assisted clause.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: That has been stopped.

HON. R. G. RANDELL: If some people had their way it would be stopped. I think when Ministers look into this question, they will find that the only course open to them is to depend on this assisted immigration, and in that way they will get the right class of people here and settle them on the soil. Even with regard to this very important question, members know that there may be a change of circumstances at an early date which will render it possible to introduce the right class of agricultural labourers from the old country, but I do not see that chance at the present time.

HON. C. A. PIERCE: The agricultural labour in the old country is not up to date.

HON. G. RANDELL: Well, I spoke to a gentleman the other day who told me it was no good going to the old country as we could not get the right labour there, that we must go to Scandinavia and to some other places.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Those people are not admissible.

HON. G. RANDELL: If we stick to the strict letter of the law, perhaps it would not be right to admit these people because they have to be able to read English.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Write a passage of English.

HON. G. RANDELL: It was never intended, at any rate I cannot believe that it was the desire of Parliament when they passed the Immigration Restriction Act, to apply it to respectable Europeans. I never undertook to carry

it into effect in that way. It is a matter that requires investigation, because it might entail national complications, and I would not like to be a party to disturbing the relationship of the mother country with the other countries of Europe. I think the House is to be congratulated that no measures of any extent are to be proposed this session. At the same time a little lower down in the Speech some important measures are mentioned, and if they are got through we shall do very well indeed. Although it has been stated that the late Government were in the habit of proposing works to a larger extent than it was ever contemplated to carry out, or possible to be put into execution during the session, yet we find this new Government, which was to be an improvement on the old Government, starting on the same scale. I do not think the late Government, with all their faults, were ever guilty of the expression of such an opinion as this in the Governor's Speech :—

It is probable that the whole of this proposed legislation may not be passed during this session.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: They do not want to bring the Bills in.

HON. G. RANDELL: At any rate we are warned beforehand that it is not expected that we are to carry out all this legislation this session. I see that the Government are proceeding on the lines of extreme caution according to one paragraph, which will have the sympathy of Mr. Hackett, because I believe he started the ball rolling. The Speech says that a Bill is to be introduced "to validate the Acts of last session." That is the extreme of caution: it is presumptuous for me to express an opinion on a matter which has exercised the brains of men of the legal profession in this city as to whether the Acts passed by Parliament last session were valid or not. I think they are valid, still there is no objection to a Bill being brought forward to make the thing perfectly sure. I agree with the Ministers who have so recently taken office that they should have an opportunity to formulate their measures, and I think hon. members will honestly help them in that. I understand that it is not intended to continue the present sittings long, but that we are to have a recess and then meet again in

August. The Government are to ask at the hands of members supplies to cover a certain period, and then to adjourn so that time may be given to them to prepare the legislation which they wish to see adopted, and to have time for looking into all their measures and their circumstances. It is necessary that the Government should have that time so as to come before Parliament with well digested measures for our consideration. I trust that the recess which will follow this first part of the session will not be too long so that we shall not be getting into hot weather before the session closes. I only hope that Ministers will be able to place such measures before us as will commend themselves to the House, and which are in the best interests of the State. I quite appreciate the feeling of caution that seems to animate Ministers at present, but I hope they will not be afraid to incur some little responsibility. A good deal of criticism has been passed on the late Premier of the State, and I regret to see, and I say it with all sincerity and earnestness, and with sorrow, that fault has been found with the acts of that gentleman. He has been criticised by many persons who received every assistance at his hands. But for a man like Sir John Forrest at the head of the Government, we should not have had such public works carried out in this State. I think, speaking without boasting, that there is not a single individual in the State who would have had the courage and boldness to adopt the policy which he did for the advancement of the State.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: You say "not an individual": you mean not a Minister.

HON. G. RANDELL: Not a single person in the State.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I think you are making a mistake.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: There is Mr. James Grave.

HON. G. RANDELL: I say that there is not another person in the State who would have been bold enough, or who had such confidence in the resources of the State, to have adopted such large measures as he did for the purpose of developing the country, and I may almost say that he has gone farther than most of us desired him to go. Some of us thought that he was involving the State

to an extent he was not justified in doing.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Were you opposed to him?

HON. G. RANDELL: A little bit: I argued with him. He has left the State and taken service in the Federal Government. I take the liberty of saying something in his favour, and I hope I shall not be accused of flattery in doing so. I say this because we see on the right hand and on the left a number of people who have benefited by his energy and skill and courage now trying to do what is called "mud-throwing." I think these statements should be repudiated by every honourable and just man. I could say more on the point, because I feel strongly on it; but I will not. I will not say that Sir John Forrest has not made mistakes, because I have told him that he has done so, but I think he deserves better of his country. I need not say more on that point. I would like to refer, with your permission, to a matter touched upon by Mr. Moss in regard to a conviction at Geraldton. I am sorry the hon. member was not acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, but I think that I know them all. I happened to go to Geraldton shortly after the case referred to was dealt with, and I never heard a word in Geraldton in regard to the sentences which were passed. I do not need to defend Mr. Brown or the gentleman who was associated with him; I believe they arrived at the conclusion that heavy sentences were necessary, and the sentences were given to mark the magistrates' sense of the crimes (not one only) that have been committed. The magistrates left it to the Government of the day to say whether the sentences should be carried into effect or not.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The Government of which you were a member reduced them.

HON. G. RANDELL: I know that very well. After careful consideration, the sentence was reduced.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Fifty per cent. of all sentences are reduced.

HON. G. RANDELL: There has been a tendency to reduce sentences; some sentences I have heard complained of recently as being unduly lenient, and I believe that is quite correct; and therefore it is difficult to satisfy the public in passing sentences upon such persons.

The young man in question has a robust appearance. I saw both men in prison. Much sympathy was sought to be excited by the statement that the younger man was a weakling and unhealthy. To my mind, he was as good a specimen of athletic and robust humanity as I could meet in a day's march. If hon. members really knew what lay behind that sentence, they would not, I think, be possessed of the feeling that too heavy a sentence has been imposed. Considering the knowledge the magistrates had that the Government could exercise the prerogative of mercy, I think the sentence has had a most excellent effect. It will show that crimes of that sort, which strike at the root of the prosperity of the country districts, are not to be tolerated in a civilised community.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It will save the cattle of the neighbours.

HON. G. RANDELL: The sentence has been reduced, and the men will again be at liberty in a very short time. It is to be regretted that such men are to be found in pastoral districts. Hon. members opposite well know what it is to have such men prowling about their farms, and to find their cattle missing. It takes the heart out of the farmers. I thought it necessary to mention this, because the hon. member (Hon. M. L. Moss) laid some stress on it; but I felt sure he had not really heard of all the circumstances. I do not know that I need say more. On the whole, I congratulate the Government on the intentions they exhibit in the Speech they have put into the mouth of the Governor, and I trust they will receive fair and reasonable consideration from all members, not only of this but of the other House. I think it very desirable that another set of men, as has been said, should have the management of affairs, even if for a short time only. I think it desirable that hon. members should become acquainted with the administration of the Government of the country; and perhaps it is not for the good of a country that a Ministry should remain in office so long as has been the case with the last Government. But as regards the sentiments which the same hon. member expressed as to a custom which prevails in South Australia, I am entirely opposed to that. When members accept portfolios, I think they should go to

their constituents and ask permission to take office in the Ministry; and it is well known that in South Australia the constant changing from one side of the House to the other in successive Ministries was the reason why, for a long time, no Parliament existed in South Australia for more than 12 months. [HON. J. W. HACKETT: That is so.] And that state of affairs should, I think, be deprecated. It is a most unwholesome principle, for it has a tendency to encourage unhealthy ambition in hon. members, and party strife, and results in the business of the country being interrupted for the sake of the emoluments of office. I trust such a condition of affairs will never prevail in this State. I think it is undoubtedly for the benefit of the country that members should realise that, in accepting office, they will have the responsibility of meeting their constituents and justifying their action, giving reasons why they have taken office.

HON. W. MALEY: I move the adjournment of the debate.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: I second that.

Motion put and passed, and the debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—DISCUSSION.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move that this House do now adjourn.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: We adjourn very early to-night. Is it probable that the debate will be finished to-morrow? It is well if hon. members can be prepared to finish to-morrow evening, so as to meet the views of country members who wish to get away.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: So far, we have had only two speeches. At this rate, the debate on the Address will take two months.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (HON. C. SOMMERS): Of course, I desire that the debate should terminate as early as possible, so that we may adjourn for a fortnight.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Hear, hear. Adjourn to-morrow night.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Do we not want the Supply Bill first?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That will not be down for a fortnight.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I should like to refer to a small matter which has evidently

escaped the attention of other members, in reference to our present accommodation in this House and its precincts. I know, sir, that you have worked very hard in this matter, and the thanks of the House are certainly due to you for the trouble you have taken.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is out of order.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I may not be in order, but I think there is nothing wrong in expressing the opinion which I know is entertained by all hon. members. During our absence you, sir, have done your best to make us comfortable, and it would show a great want of appreciation on our part if we did not express our thanks. I should like to place on record our high appreciation of the comforts we, as representatives of the people, now enjoy; and I know that in so doing I am echoing the feelings of every member of this House.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned accordingly at 8:45 o'clock until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd July, 1901.

Members Sworn, additional—Questions to Ministers, Procedure—Question, Strike at Fremantle—Questions, W.A. Bushmen (Contingent), Bonus, Furlough—Question or Motion—Address-in-reply, second day of debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

MEMBERS SWORN, ADDITIONAL.

The Clerk (Mr. C. Lee Steere) having produced returns to writs showing that Mr. Robert David Hutchinson had been elected for Geraldton, Mr. Albert Young Hassell for Plantagenet, and Mr. Patrick Stone for Greenough, those members took the oath and subscribed the roll.