

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 23rd July, 1903.

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

PRAYERS.

DEPUTY CHAIRMEN APPOINTED.

THE SPEAKER informed the House that, following the practice of last Session and in accordance with Standing Order No. 21A, he had nominated the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) and the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) as Deputy Chairmen of Committees, to act during the absence of the Chairman of Committees (Mr. Harper), in the present Session.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: Public Service Commission, Sixth Progress Report.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: By-laws and regulations made under Lands Acts, under Parks and Reserves Act, regulations under Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, rules under Licensed Surveyors Act, under Cemeteries Act, amendment of tick boundary under Stock Diseases Act, regulations under Agricultural Bank Act.

By the PREMIER: Regulations under Education Act.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

QUESTION—MINING WAGES, EFFECT OF HIGH RATE.

MR. BATH asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What justification he had for the statement contained in the Annual Report of the Mines Department for 1902, "that the high rate of wages in Western Australia militates to a great extent against the development of the

mining resources of the State." 2, If information bearing out this contention was available, why it was not published in the Annual Report for the information of members.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, The Report of the Department of Mines does not make the statement referred to. 2, Answered by 1.

QUESTION—UNEMPLOYED LABOUR.

MR. BATH asked the Premier: Whether he would provide that definite particulars of the abundance of employment in this State, of which he speaks, would be supplied to the various Government Labour Bureaus, so that the unemployed might avail themselves of such employment.

THE PREMIER replied: Will the honourable member be more specific as to the statement made by me, and to which he refers?

QUESTION—DAIRYING INDUSTRY, BONUS.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Whether the Minister would consider the advisability of granting annually, for the next three years, a prize of £100 for the largest quantity of butter produced by any single exhibitor at each of the three shows held in the South-Western District, conditionally on the subscription of a sum of £50 locally for the same purpose in connection with each show, and subject to such regulations and stipulations as to quantity and quality as to the Minister may seem fit. 2, Whether the Minister would consider the advisability of assisting the progress of the dairying industry by allotting, subject to similar conditions, an annual prize of £50 for the best ten acres of artificial grass, the amount of local subscription to be, proportionately, £25.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, I will be pleased to favourably consider any application made on the lines indicated. 2, Yes.

QUESTION—EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS, ARTIFICIAL GRASSES.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Whether the Minister had considered the advisability

of establishing experimental plots for the purpose of testing the suitability of West Australian soil for the cultivation of artificial grasses. 2, Whether the Minister would instruct the Agricultural Branch of his Department to take steps at once to prepare a plot every five miles, say, along the Government railway from North Dandalup to Bridgetown (conditionally on the land being granted to the Government free of charge for the purpose), so that the planting may be done not later than next season.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2, It is considered preferable to work in unison with careful agriculturists on lines laid down in circular, copy of which has been addressed to hon. members.

QUESTION—HARVEY DRAIN.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Whether the Harvey main drain had been completed? If not, when the work would be finished. 2, What was the unexpended balance of the amount voted by Parliament for drainage purposes.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No; in December of this year. 2, The unexpended balance for "Development of Agriculture, including Drainage," is £4,973 10s. 4d.

QUESTION—ROADS AND BRIDGES, TRAVELLING COMMISSIONER.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH asked the Minister for Works: Whether he would consider the advisability of appointing a travelling commissioner of roads and bridges, whose duty it shall be to visit the various road board districts and to inquire personally into the needs of each district, and to advise the Minister on the merits of applications by road boards for grants in aid of the construction of roads and bridges.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The Minister for Works will consider the advisability of appointing a travelling commissioner of roads and bridges. The Roads Act, however, passed last Session, empowers the Government to more directly control the accounts and audit, and it is intended to appoint a class of man to do this work who will be also capable of checking the methods of con-

struction and maintenance adopted by the various boards, and to advise the boards thereon. It is expected that these officers will gradually acquire such a knowledge of the requirements of the various districts as to be capable of advising the central administration in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Wellington. It is unlikely (having regard to the size of the State and the number of district roads boards already existing) that any one travelling commissioner could do the work required.

QUESTION—EXPLOSIVES MAGAZINES, PRECAUTIONS.

MR. DIAMOND asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What special precautions (if any) have been taken at the Explosives Magazines in the interests of the safety of the people of Fremantle. 2, How many watchmen are there employed (a.) by day; (b.) by night. 3, When the removal of the magazines is to be carried out.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Extra watchmen have been put on; a constable is stationed at the magazine during the day, and no magazines are allowed to be opened except under his supervision; the reserve is patrolled by mounted police during the day. 2, (a.) One watchman by day, and a policeman in charge, but the latter is only temporary. (b.) Two watchmen from four p.m. until midnight, and two watchmen relieving these from midnight until eight a.m. 3, It is anticipated that everything will be in readiness within three months.

QUESTION—ROADS BOARD RATES, NOT STRUCK.

MR. STONE asked the Attorney General: Whether the Government will take steps to legalise rates struck by Road Boards after the date specified in the Roads Act, owing to their being unable to obtain the necessary information to complete the rate books in time.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: The Minister for Works will consider the advisability of appointing a Travelling Commissioner of Roads and Bridges. The Roads Act, however, passed last session, empowers the Government to more directly control the accounts and audit, and it is intended to

appoint a class of man to do this work who will be also capable of checking the methods of construction and maintenance adopted by the various boards, and to advise the boards thereon. It is expected that these officers will gradually acquire such a knowledge of the requirements of the various districts as to be capable of advising the central administration in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Wellington. It is unlikely (having regard to the size of the State and the number of District Roads Boards already existing) that any one Travelling Commissioner could do the work required.

MR. STONE: Many of the roads boards of the State have not been able to rate themselves. They had to obtain maps showing the owners of the property in the districts, as they could not find out the proper persons to rate. These boards want the time extended so that they can strike a rate; for if they struck one now it would not be legal. They want the Act made retrospective.

THE PREMIER: The roads boards concerned will have to make specific application in each case.

PROBATE AND ADMINISTRATION BILL.

Introduced by the **PREMIER**, and read a first time.

GOLD MINES BILL.

Introduced by the **MINISTER FOR MINES**, and read a first time.

RAILWAYS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the **MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS**, and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

THIRD DAY OF DEBATE.

Resumed from the previous day.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas): I would like, before dealing with His Excellency's Speech, to most heartily congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your recovery, and also to state my pleasure at hearing from you, in the earlier part of this sitting, that you had appointed two deputy chairmen in order to relieve you, when occasion demanded, from your arduous duties. It is a matter of hearty

congratulation by every member to have you again with us. As far as His Excellency's Speech is concerned, I can most heartily congratulate the Government upon the length of it if not upon the quality of it.

THE PREMIER: It is the shortest Speech that has been delivered for the past four years.

MR. THOMAS: I again say I congratulate the Government on the length of it but not on the quality of it. I cannot help noticing that the Government have taken upon themselves, in the third paragraph of the Speech, to state exactly what the feeling of the State is regarding a matter of world-wide importance. They say:—

The recent movement in the mother country towards securing closer trade relations between the various parts of the Empire has been welcomed in this State with feelings of warm sympathy and sincere hopes for its ultimate success.

I am not sure the Government should be able to place on record, in the Governor's Speech, that the whole State is in favour of what they themselves may be in favour of. I object to a statement of this sort appearing in the Speech, although at the same time I am most heartily in accord with the sentiments expressed therein. I do sincerely trust the Government will cause inquiry to be made, and that the Government of this State will keep in close touch with the Government of the Commonwealth, and through them with the Home Government, in order to show the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain exactly what is the feeling that exists in this State and in the other parts of Australia, in order that this information may be ready to allow him to formulate the scheme which the vast majority of the people of this State and Australia generally are anxious to see realised, so that they may be brought into closer touch with each other, and may have free-trade within the Empire and protection against the rest of the world, which is at present exploiting the Empire's markets, without attempting to give anything to the British in return for the profits derived. The Transcontinental Railway occupies a very prominent place in the Speech; and I must say for a start that no man in Western Australia believes more thoroughly than I in the necessity for a

railway connecting this country with the Eastern States. But I say that the Government, and especially the Premier, have a very funny way of attempting to gain their ends and to meet the desire of the people of this State for the early construction of the line. I do not wish to say anything in anticipation of a motion which I have placed on the Notice Paper, and which I hope will be discussed next Wednesday. [MR. HASTIE: You have already said it.] Yes; I drew the attention of the Speaker to the fact that the hon. member was out of order yesterday in referring to my motion. But there is in the Speech one line to which I cannot help referring:—

And we may with confidence rely for a solution of this temporary difficulty upon those ties of friendship and commerce which have always been so close between these two States.

Now if the Premier and his Government have such a kindly feeling for the Eastern States and for South Australia in particular, how can he explain his statements made last session in reply to my speech in this House on the subject of the Esperance-Goldfields Railway? On that occasion he told me that apparently I wanted the railway to Esperance only to allow the farmers in Victoria and in South Australia an opportunity of competing with those of this State; and that he at any rate would do his utmost to protect our agricultural and other industries against the rest of Australia. But, strange to say, at an interview with the Press in Adelaide, after attending the Premiers' Conference, he urged upon the South Australians the necessity for consenting to this Transcontinental Railway—"because," he said, "we wish to allow you to participate in our markets and to take your fair share of the goldfields trade." But if the Government and the Premier are so anxious to show their goodwill and to prove that we are bound to South Australia by ties of friendship and commerce, why do they retain the food duties and the sliding scale? Why not ask this House to abolish these imposts? The revenue is not needed. The Treasurer can tell the House that he has all the revenue he wants—[THE TREASURER: Never]—and that he is able to construct public works out of revenue; so it cannot be urged that this money is wanted

purely for revenue purposes. Again I ask the Premier, if he is sincere in his desire to show his friendship to the other States, why does he insist, even in the *Government Gazette* of last month, on still advertising the differential railway rates in favour of the local producer as against the importer? Can it be wondered at that the Eastern States say: "No. Until Western Australia shows a truer federal spirit than has been shown in the past, until she shows it by the abolition of her food duties and the construction of works which will allow the Eastern States to enter into fair competition for the trade of the West, we shall not be convinced." No wonder those States are inclined to block our darling project—the construction of a railway which will bring us and them into closer touch. I can only judge of that matter by what I read in the Eastern Press and in interviews with leading public men of the Eastern States which I see reported in the *West Australian* and *Morning Herald* newspapers. But I do not intend to go too deeply into that matter, which will be discussed on a motion I shall move next Wednesday. Regarding the question of food supplies, the cheapening of living, and the differential railway rates, if the Premier believes in strengthening the ties of friendship with the other States he should first, before complaining of the anti-federal spirit displayed by another State, give it a good illustration of what a truly federal spirit should be. As to the Goldfields Water Scheme, I am not at all in sympathy with the snatch amendment recently carried at a meeting on the goldfields. [MR. BURGESS: You admit it was carried.] I shall explain that. I am sure that the vast majority of those who attended that meeting were carried away in the heat of the moment, and were not aware until afterwards, as was shown by subsequent speeches of those who voted, of the importance of the amendment which they passed in a hurry.

THE PREMIER: If public meetings in those districts are so impressionable, that accounts for your success.

MR. THOMAS: Unfortunately, at that meeting the people were carried away, probably by their feelings towards the Premier and the Government of the

State. The Premier having only a few days before made his celebrated want-of-policy speech in the Perth Town Hall, those people were suffering because a large proportion of his followers consisted of goldfields members and ostensible goldfields sympathisers; and the people felt somewhat riled that the Ministry, through their mouthpiece the Premier, had said nothing regarding any works for the fields; therefore one can well imagine the meeting being carried away by an amendment aiming at the Government and at the Premier himself. But I do not wish to make any excuse or attempted excuse for that meeting. I thoroughly believe the amendment was carried in the heat of the moment, and was not believed in by the majority of those who held up hands in its favour, as was shown by the speeches subsequently made when other people tried to get the resolution annulled. But—I fear I am falling into the habit of the member for Kanowna by the frequent use of “but”—I do say there was a certain justification for a protest, and a strong protest, coming from that meeting in regard to the rating. A long agreement has been gazetted which everyone must sign before water is laid on to his premises; an agreement which I think no fair-minded business man would sign without the strongest possible protest, if not something more than a protest; and in it there are all sorts of absurd stipulations. It imposes a rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound. If the Government would tell us that they propose to make other localities pay for other water schemes and other public works, I might understand their demanding this one-and-sixpenny rate from people who have this water whether they want it or not, or whether they have sufficient water without the scheme. But if we are not to charge up other works to separate localities, then I distinctly affirm that the Goldfields Water Scheme, if there ever was a national undertaking in Western Australia, is national.

THE TREASURER: Last year we paid £150,000 for it out of the public purse.

THE PREMIER: Some people want water for nothing.

MR. THOMAS: We shall come to that directly, and I will give you my proposal—a reiteration of what I proposed last year. A rabbit-proof fence is now

being constructed, and is it intended to make a national scheme of that? Are the goldfields going to save one penny by that?

MR. BURGESS: Yes; by getting meat cheaper.

MR. THOMAS: If you remove the food duties, we will soon have meat cheaper.

THE PREMIER: There is no duty on meat.

MR. THOMAS: When the member for York refers to “meat,” I take him to mean the whole of the food we consume. However, a rabbit-proof fence is now being constructed, and I ask the Premier whether he intends to charge that only to the farmers within that fence, or whether he intends to make it a charge against the public revenue.

THE PREMIER: The charge for the fence will be on the same basis as we charge for the State batteries in your district.

MR. THOMAS: No; you put up your battery and then you charge at per ton, and you have succeeded in making the batteries pay.

THE PREMIER: And we want to make the Water Scheme pay also.

MR. THOMAS: Most certainly; but I will come to that in a moment. I take it now that the Premier has given a promise to the House that he will do the same with the rabbit-proof fence as with the batteries, that he is going to make those who use the service pay for it. I am highly delighted, and so will the people on the goldfields be delighted, to hear that the Premier intends to make the farmers within the rabbit-proof fence pay for the benefits they will get by it, because that is only a fair thing. There is also a proposal in the Governor's Speech to spend a sum of £120,000 to £150,000 in extending the breakwater at Bunbury; and they evidently think it is wanted only to facilitate the export of timber.

[**MEMBER:** No.] There are mighty little imports into Bunbury. The chief trade of that harbour of Bunbury is the export of timber, and that breakwater is being extended because at the present time, as is well known to residents of Bunbury, it is unsafe for a steamer to lie there and be charged up with cargo. The steamers have to lie off from the breakwater; and for that reason the

Government propose to spend this money for the benefit of the timber mills. If the goldfields are to be taxed for the entire cost of the water scheme and the entire cost of a sinking fund, then I say that, to be consistent, the Premier should also make an announcement that not only will the settlers within the rabbit-proof fence have to pay for the cost of the fence, its upkeep and sinking fund, but also that the timber mills will be charged interest and sinking fund on the £120,000 which is to be spent at Bunbury Harbour for the benefit alone of the timber industry.

THE PREMIER: More than the interest and sinking fund will be paid in wharfage dues. We are satisfied on that point.

MR. THOMAS: As to what I think would be a fair thing, I have no desire to go back on the statement I made last session when the Coolgardie Goldfields Water Scheme Bill was before this House on its second reading, when I stated rather strongly that I was in favour of a rate being struck that would apply to everyone. But there is a difference between a rate which would be a fair thing, and an exorbitant rate—a rate of 1s. 6d. which the Government propose to put on now. I would suggest that first a sensible agreement should be drawn up to which an ordinary business man would be prepared to place his signature—that is the first essential; then that a small rate should be charged to the owners of all properties on the fields that might be served by the water scheme; and finally, that after this they should pay for the water they consume through the meter.

THE PREMIER: Taking the difference between the value of water supplied in Perth and water supplied on the goldfields, you say that 1s. 6d. on the goldfields is disproportionate to 1s. in Perth?

MR. THOMAS: I do.

THE PREMIER: Is not water 50 per cent. more valuable in Kalgoorlie than in Perth?

MR. THOMAS: The people on the fields have already spent money and sunk capital in providing water for themselves.

THE PREMIER: The same in Perth and suburbs, exactly.

MR. THOMAS: Not to the same extent.

THE PREMIER: Yes. Look at the dozens of windmills.

MR. THOMAS: Take my own case. I have been a resident on the fields for seven years, and have always had a fairly large stable, which of course means a big consumption of water. During that period I have never spent a halfpenny on water; yet now I shall have to pay £16 a year to the Government for water which I cannot use.

THE PREMIER: A man who can afford to keep a stable on the goldfields can afford to pay a rate for water.

MR. THOMAS: I say the rate the Government intend to levy is altogether too high. There should be a lower rate, and then a charge at per thousand gallons for water the consumer uses. I will get to this point in connection with the scheme, and will give the Government a warning. So far as I can see, they are going on the principle of starting by fixing a certain price for goods they have to sell, and finding they have not a big market for those goods at the price which they are charging, they say "That is easily remedied: we will increase the price, and we will get more money." I notice the Minister for Works shakes his head, but that is what is being done.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Nothing of the kind.

MR. THOMAS: We are being charged for water at 8s. a thousand gallons for the mines, and 6s. for private individuals. Is that not so?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

MR. THOMAS: What is the rate?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe you are addressing the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot argue a point with another member.

MR. THOMAS: I thought that they were arguing with me. I am glad the Speaker has called me to order on that point. I was led astray by the Premier himself. As far as the mines are concerned, the Government had full warning last Session and the Session before. I laid the position clearly enough before them, and afterwards it was again laid clearly before the Minister by deputations from the mine owners, that if the water were sold at a low rate the mines would use no salt water and would use only scheme water for the whole of their works. At present the agreement they have is that

they shall not buy water, salt or fresh, from anyone other than the Government, but that they shall be allowed to use any salt water they have got. The result is that at present the large majority of mines are using salt water and not scheme water. I would urge on the Minister—and I am sure after the conferences that have already taken place he is going to agree with their suggestion—that he should provide the mines with water at so low a price as to insure that they shall use none but scheme water for the batteries, etcetera. If he gives way on that point for the mines, he should run his scheme on the same business principle when he deals with the private consumer. The cheaper the water, the greater will be the attempts made by people to run market gardens and to increase those home comforts which can be got by the use of water. But if the Minister continues to charge three times as much for water as Sir John Forrest promised it would be, he cannot expect to get a large consumption.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : But they are taking a less quantity than was estimated.

MR. THOMAS : And as long as the Minister keeps up a high price, he cannot expect to sell as much water as he would if the price were low. What is necessary is that the people should be encouraged to use the water by bringing down the price to the lowest possible limit. They have been accustomed for years to economise in the use of water on the fields, and time is needed to accustom them to the new condition of a plentiful supply. I am satisfied that, with a high price, you will not make a financial success of the scheme as far as private consumers are concerned; whereas if the price is brought to the lowest possible extent, you will get a gradual increase in the consumption, an increase which cannot be arrived at by any other means.

THE PREMIER : What do you think "the lowest possible extent?"

MR. THOMAS : I think that, taking the estimates of the cost and the statement of the Minister that the scheme has been constructed for less than the sum mentioned in the reports laid before the House, taking also the expert opinion of the engineer that water could be delivered

on the goldfields for 3s. 6d. a thousand gallons, taking reticulation also into consideration, I think the water should be supplied to private consumers at 5s. a thousand gallons, and at that price you would find an infinitely larger revenue than if you charged, as at present, 8s. per 1,000 gallons, which price will not allow people to use water as they would otherwise do. I have been led astray somewhat by the remarks from the Treasury bench; and as during other days of this Session there will be ample opportunity to speak on the various subjects mentioned in the Address, I shall not deal now with as many of the subjects in the Governor's Speech as I otherwise would do. I would like to say this, however, in regard to the progress of the mining industry and the remarks of the member for Kanowna, that I have not one word to take back from what I placed on record in this House last Session. It was stated by the member for Kanowna yesterday that I gave a dismal account then of the outlook of the mining industry in this State. If I gave a dismal outlook when I said last Session that the mining industry of Western Australia was in jeopardy, I am still more emphatic in the expression of that opinion to-day. We are rapidly getting to this position in Western Australia, and I speak my mind freely and unhesitatingly, that capital cannot be induced to interest itself in the mines of this State; and I defy contradiction on this point. It may be stated that we have the report of the Mines Department assuring us there is all-round progress; we have also the report of the Colonial Treasurer of an increase in the revenue; but I say we are bolstering ourselves up with a feeling of false security. The gold yield is increasing, but the number of men employed in the mines has increased only by the small amount of 705. There was a big increase in the number of men employed at Day Dawn, about 400, due, as members will know, to the increased number of stamps at the Great Fingall; and there was a big increase of about 200 at East Murchison. That accounts for 600 out of the 705. In 15 districts out of 30 in Western Australia there was an absolute decrease in the number of men employed, and I say that speaks for itself.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There was an increase in the gold yield.

MR. THOMAS: An increase of gold with fewer men means nothing. I will say this again. It is no good for us to rock ourselves into a position of false security by saying one ton this year produces two ounces, and the next year one ton produces four ounces, therefore we are eight pounds to the better. We are not. We know what the cost of production is, and after the cost of production is paid everything else goes outside of the State, so that the amount of the yield means nothing.

THE TREASURER: Did not the dividends increase?

MR. THOMAS: We have this fact remaining that there are no new mines starting in Western Australia at the present time, but there are plenty of mines on the eve of being shut up, and I say the cause of that is the unsettled state and conditions existing in our mining. It would be infinitely better if the Labour members in this House were to ask the people whom they represent to keep in closer contact with the people who employ them in order to come to some common understanding, rather than that the member for Kanowna should stand up in his place as he did yesterday and state he does not believe in any competition in trade.

MR. HASTIE: Who said that?

MR. THOMAS: I gathered that the member for Kanowna said so yesterday.

MR. HASTIE: I never heard it.

MR. THOMAS: He said he did not believe in competition in trade. We have this fact staring us in the face, that the employer is busy fighting the employee.

MR. TAYLOR: He always has been.

MR. THOMAS: And the employee and his representatives in the House are doing all they can to fight the employer, leaving their tradesmen and the publican to come in between and take the profits of both. It would be infinitely better, instead of having such a state of affairs as that, if some reasonable, fair-thinking men on both sides sat down and discussed the matter. I am not afraid of what the Labour party may say about me. I leave myself to the judgment of the hundreds upon hundreds of men who have been employed by me and who have received

wages from me: I leave myself to their judgment and not to the judgment of the Labour members in this House.

MR. HOLMAN: I have heard a few of them judge you lately.

MR. THOMAS: And I have heard a few of them judge the member for North Murchison. It astonishes me to find the Labour party in this House arrogating to themselves the position that there is no one in the House who can have any opinion or idea of progressive legislation unless he is bound to a class. I was returned to the House to fight against all class legislation. The Labour members in this House were also returned to fight against class legislation, but we find them here standing up to a man, doing all they can and preaching class legislation from early morning till late at night. [MEMBER: Rot!] I am not speaking "rot"; I am speaking the truth. The Labour party know full well that they believe anything they say in the sacred cause of labour is true, and that everyone who will not follow them is not doing what is right, that he is untrue to the principles of democracy and untrue to the principles of progress. It is about time everything like that was done away with, and that some people in the country were taught that outside of the Labour party there may be some men who have principles of progress, and who wish to work for the common welfare and to go ahead.

MR. HASTIE: Where will you find them?

MR. THOMAS: Not amongst the Labour party. I speak on this matter feelingly, and I think it is about time the public men of the State spoke feelingly on the same matter. I am not afraid to express my opinion on this question. I believe that men who are elected to the House, once they are sent here, come to represent every section of the country; that they have to work together for the common good of the State as a whole. [MR. TAYLOR: Then why don't you help us?] I have helped on everything I can for the common progress of the State, and wherever there has been a Bill brought forward which would benefit everyone, I have helped the Labour members to do what we could for the common good of the State. I have helped to pass every Bill which I thought

was not only in the interests of the Labour party, but in the interests of the State as a whole. We have this position—and I wish to refer to it because I do not know that there will be any time during the Session that it will come up for discussion unless I give notice for a special motion upon it—I want to refer to this matter because I have referred to it before my constituents: whether a man be returned to this House by a labour vote, whether he be returned to this House by a farming vote, whether he be returned by the capitalist vote, once he is here he has to do his best for the lot. We have this peculiar position, that cases are brought before a Court in this country, a Court properly constituted as much a Court as the Supreme Court is—I am referring to the Court of Arbitration, which is presided over by a Judge of the Supreme Court, and sitting with him a representative nominated by the employers, and another representative nominated by the employees—and we have this peculiar position, that members of this House appear before that Court to advocate the claims of one class against another. I say most emphatically that is absolutely wrong, and does not meet with my approval. I noticed the other day that a case was heard in Kalgoolie, and a member of this House was conducting the case for one class against another. I care not which side the man was appearing for. I say this, and I hope the House will pardon me for repeating it, that no man who is a member of the House has the right to go before any Court and advocate the claims of any section of the community against another section, because if he does so he must show bias; and when he comes into the House I shall ask him how can he look at the question fairly and squarely and give an unbiased opinion and an unbiased vote. That is the objection I have to the Labour member of this House who does not credit anyone but himself with having the courage of his opinions, who has not the generosity to state that anyone who gets up can have one atom of progress or democracy in him. I have found that there are many men outside the ranks of labour who have a great deal more democracy and progress than I ever knew the Labour members to show. I have been challenged on this

matter publicly, and I have taken the first opportunity and the earliest opportunity of defining myself on the question. I am prepared to work with the Labour party and with everybody to advocate anything which I believe to be for the progress of the State as a whole; but I will not follow the Labour members on the assumption—these seven, or any one—that they have the right to tell the House what to do, that they are the only men who have the right to say what is to be passed for the progress of the country. I will not follow them on that point, and the sooner they come down the better from the attitude they have taken up during the last few months and say that they recognise that outside their ranks there are men in the House just as much in favour of progress as themselves, just as much in favour of democracy as themselves, although those men are not bound by signature to a platform, and therefore are not controlled by organisations outside this House. A letter appeared in one of the newspapers a few days ago which contained a vast amount of truth. It stated that an attempt was made to make this Assembly the registry office for acts and motions passed outside. I will not, so long as I am here, consent and give my vote at any time for class legislation, I do not care on whose behalf. I earnestly entreat those members—not so much the members here, but those persons outside who have been talking so much on this subject—to come down from the attitude they have taken up, and recognise that there are fair and square-minded men outside their ranks who are prepared to help them for the progress and for the good of the whole community. There is only one other matter to which I would like to refer, that is the new works which are proposed; and in this connection the House need not be afraid that I am going to trespass on their time unduly in dealing with the railway which is so dear to my heart, for I shall have farther opportunities of dealing with that great and important question later on. I am glad to see the Government intend to build a railway to Laverton. I think that railway is thoroughly warranted, and I presume it will go straight ahead from Morgans as soon as the railway gets to that point. No other railway has been proposed in the Speech for the

opening up of the chief industry of the State. A railway has been talked of from Collie, to open up an agricultural district, and the Premier in his policy speech in advocating that line stated that if that railway of 75 miles were built, it would settle some six hundred people upon the soil—six hundred families, I beg his pardon. In this connection I only want to refer, for a brief moment or so, to Norseman. That district now has 410 men employed there and is, as every one knows, working under a handicap and other difficulties. We know full well that if the railway were constructed to open up the district of Norseman, those 410 men would not decrease but would probably increase to a considerable extent; and on the road to Norseman, if we take the railway from either Kalgoorlie or Lakeside, we have a large number of people employed on the Hampton Plains and at Red Hill—a large number of families. We have a few families at Widgenooltha, and if the railway went from Kalgoorlie, we have a thousand people in all, in the Burbanks and Londonderry districts. In that district as it is now there are more families, or should be more if we had the conditions of living, without a railway than the Premier anticipates to put into another district by the construction of a railway. When the right time comes, no one will be found more strongly in support of the line to open up the land from Collie than the member for Dundas, and I have said that repeatedly. But I say there are more urgent works; and if the Government are not prepared to go ahead with a big loan and public works policy, if they restrict public works, then I say the works should be constructed in their order of merit. And I defy anyone to contradict me in the assertion that it is better to build a railway where we have 600 to 1,000 families already residing than, as the Premier suggests, to build a line to where he hopes to take some of these people, and some from other districts, to settle them on the soil—to run a line through a district where there is no one or practically no one residing, and to put the 600 families there, in preference to building a railway to where the 600 families are now to be found. I leave it to the common sense of any man to say which railway he would

prefer. As long as I am in this House I intend to insist that the public work of chief importance, that which should be taken first, is the work we have talked so much about for the last six or seven years—the railway south of the goldfields to their natural port. I say we are on the eve of the passing of a Bill with that end in view; because to-day we are in a position never occupied before in the history of that railway agitation. We have to-day a Cabinet of six Ministers, four of whom were returned pledged to do their utmost for the early and speedy construction of that line. Therefore I, as member for the district most intimately concerned, feel more pleasure in speaking on the subject than I have ever felt since entering this House; because, knowing that four out of the six Ministers are pledged up to the hilt to build that line, I feel certain that I shall be able to take a very welcome message to my constituents.

THE PREMIER: Then if you think that, what crying ingratitude you show by sitting on the Opposition side of the House.

MR. THOMAS: I should have sat down but for that interjection. The Premier knows full well that he has been using the goldfields very conveniently—he and his predecessors—for the last two Sessions. The member for York (Mr. Burges), when he spoke as the mouthpiece of the Government in seconding the Address-in-Reply, said he was glad to see that the Government had given another sop to the goldfields. As far as I can see, the Premier has been very busy during the last six or nine months, and has accomplished his work most excellently. Speaking in the words of the member for York, I may say the Premier has thrown enough sops around, has secured his majority, and is able to tell the goldfields people that he has no farther use for them or their support; that they can do their worst, as he has his majority without them. But I am sorry to hear the Premier's interjection, that because I sit here I am hindering the construction of the line.

THE PREMIER: No; we recommend the construction of that work to the Commonwealth.

MR. THOMAS: The Premier was always one of the most bitter in attack-

ing the former occupants of the Treasury bench, because he said the then Premier (Sir John Forrest) had openly boasted of his belief in "spoils to the victors;" and I am sorry to see also, and I should have omitted to speak of it but for the interjection of the Premier, that the policy which he so strongly condemned in Sir John Forrest has been carried out by the present Ministry, and that the Premier, at all events according to his interjection, intends to carry it out in this country. I say with all sincerity, and I will appeal to the Minister for Mines and to his own State Mining Engineer, who can corroborate my statement, that if Norseman had been in any other district of Western Australia but that unhappy one between the Eastern Goldfields and Esperance, it would long ago have had a railway. That district never looked better than it looks now; and the Minister knows that full well, because he has advised the erection of a new battery there, a new cyanide plant, a new tailings plant, and a heavy expenditure in bringing water from the Government dam, which was built when the Government had committed themselves to this railway—built for the purpose of bringing water into Norseman and to the Princess Royal, thereby showing their faith in the district and its potentialities. This year's gold output will be the biggest that district has ever yielded, although the largest mine in the district has been closed for some months. When the Government are proposing to build railways for the development of the mining industry, they should be guided to some extent by the opinions of their Minister for Mines, their State Mining Engineer, and their Government Geologist, as to the capabilities of the district to which they intend to give railway communication. The Norseman district has been turning out more gold than most districts to which the Government have of late years built railways. The Speech hints at a railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar and Nullagine; and I say a railway is necessary in that district to open up its undoubted mineral resources. But I cannot understand the attitude of the Government, when the Premier proposes in all seriousness either to negotiate for the construction of that line by private enterprise—with which

proposal I am entirely in accord—or to have the line built by the State, though at the same time making no mention of building a railway to Norseman, which turns out more gold in three months than the two Pilbarras together yield in 12 months, and that in the face of just as great difficulties as are found in Pilbarra. In regard to the Speech, I should like to say I regret the Government have not been able to come before us with a more go-ahead policy of public works, in furtherance of the chief industry of this State. It appears to me the Premier is more than ever determined to go ahead with the old policy of centralisation which has so seriously injured other States, and which, before this country is much older, will be so disastrous to this State. The member for Claremont (Mr. Foulkes), in moving the Address-in-Reply, informed us that there were 73,000 people in the metropolitan area of this State. I ask members to think for a moment that in this vast territory of Western Australia almost one-third of the total population is resident in Perth and Fremantle; and I leave it to the common sense of the Premier himself whether it would not be better for him to abandon the old idea which obtained in this country for so long, of doing everything for the benefit of Perth and Fremantle, and to come out with some broad and defined policy for opening up other districts and other ports which have proved themselves worthy of development. If that is not done, we know well that a large proportion of the population will continue to reside in the metropolis. We wish to get the people away from Perth and Fremantle; but the Premier's policy will not achieve that object. And the time is rapidly approaching when some man will have to arise—and I regret to see that the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), recently leader of the Opposition, has seen fit to abandon his work in that behalf—when some man must arise who will organise in this State what had to be organised in South Australia before reforms could be carried out—a country party, to see that the policy of centralisation, which has so long been pursued, is killed once and for all.

THE TREASURER: What is the matter with you? You are not feeling well?

MR. THOMAS: I prefer to leave the formation of a party to a man who is competent to lead; but I say the time is rapidly approaching when the country will call for a man who will formulate some go-ahead policy of decentralisation on the lines I have sketched out; and I am sure the country will not find that man in any present occupant of the Treasury bench, for Ministers are hide-bound men—and they have proved it in their policy speech—whose only idea is to centralise everything in Perth and Fremantle. I am glad, however, to find that they have brought into the Cabinet one strain of new blood in the person of the Minister for Lands (Hon. J. M. Hopkins), and that he intends to act on my suggestion. He wrote a letter to each member of the House telling us that he intended sending out an emissary, Mr. Wilbur, to lecture on the advantages of settling on the soil; and I understand that he has now decided to act on the hint I gave him in my reply to his letter, that I was thoroughly in accord with his views, and perfectly satisfied that he would not continue the policy carried out for so many years of deliberately shutting up the land in one section of the country—I am now speaking of that section from Albany to Eucla—and making the people go to other districts, but that he would open it up to settlement. I was thoroughly in accord with the suggestion that Mr. Wilbur should deliver lectures on the advantages which would accrue from settlement on the undeniably good soil between Norseman and Esperance and from Eucla to Albany.

THE PREMIER: Why should not the Minister for Lands be the future leader of your side?

MR. THOMAS: He has given way too much to the Premier. Although that go-ahead policy has not been laid before us in the Governor's Speech, I hope that the Ministry, or at least the Premier, will be able to bring before us ere the Session closes Bills for the construction of important works which will not only sustain gold mining, the main industry of this country, but will reflect prosperity on every section of the community, and leave the people much more prosperous and contented than we now find them.

MR. T. H. BATH (Hannans): Before addressing myself to the Governor's

Speech, I must express regret that at the opening of this the last Session of the present Parliament, we have not had any programme or policy placed before us by the Opposition.

MR. JACOBY: That is not our business.

MR. BATH: That might have led the occupants of this (Labour) bench at least to transfer their allegiance to a party which brought down a more democratic policy than the Government propounded. I have listened attentively to the last speaker, and am glad to hear that he has undertaken a task which the late leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) found too heavy. I hope that during the hon. member's occupancy of the front Opposition bench he will have a democratic influence on the Opposition which will lead them to take a more advanced view of the possibilities of Western Australia than they take now. Speaking to the motion before us, the first paragraph of the Speech which claims my attention is that which places in the mouth of the Governor these words:—

The recent movement in the mother country towards securing closer trade relations between the various parts of the Empire has been welcomed in this State with feelings of warm sympathy and sincere hopes for its ultimate success.

I do not know what reason induced His Excellency's advisers to include this; whether it was for the sake of mere literary ornamentation, or

The applause of listening senates to command.

But whatever may have actuated them, I cannot compliment them on the wisdom of inserting such a paragraph. I yield to none in this Assembly in my desire for the continuance and the increase of the *prestige* of the British race; but I certainly consider that in Western Australia, in the other States of the Commonwealth, and in the rest of the British dominions, there will be considerable diversity of opinion as to whether this *prestige* will be enhanced by the proposal of Mr. Chamberlain. Not only that, but the proposal is one which is not within the province of this Legislature to deal with; it is solely within the province of the Commonwealth Government; and if we have no desire that the Commonwealth should interfere in matters which are our exclusive concern, we should set the example by not

interfering with those questions which come within their purview. There is also the fact to be remembered that during recent years this State, in common with the others, has obtained an ever-increasing trade with other countries outside of the British dominions; and I ask whether it is advisable for us to introduce any proposal which may not increase our trade with the British dominions, but which, on the contrary, may cause those other countries outside of the British dominions, in a retaliatory spirit, to transfer their trade to other countries which can supply articles they at present obtain from the Australian States. We have also in the Governor's Speech reference made to the Civil Service Commission, and I cannot think that the tone of that reference is a complimentary one. There seems to be an underlying doubt as to the wisdom of the Commission's suggestions, and if such is the case, what was the object of the Government in going to such enormous expense in appointing the Commission, if the recommendations made are to be disregarded, or if only a small portion of them are to be accepted? I hope at least that the work of the Commission on the forests of Western Australia will be of more use, and that their recommendations will be of value in conserving the valuable forests of this country. The next question of importance in the Governor's Speech is that of the mining development of the State; and in dealing with that, we deal with a question which has aroused considerable controversy in this Assembly. The member for Dundas just now resembled

Ocean into tempest wrought,

To waft a feather or to drown a fly,

by the manner in which he spoke of the occupants of the Labour benches for what he is pleased to term their attack on the mining industry. What we have stated is that the position of the mining industry at the present time does not justify the pessimistic views taken by many of the leading employers, views which have been re-echoed by the Premier, and which also appear in the report of the Mines Department. It appears to me that the Chamber of Mines, as stated by the member for Kanowna, has not only hypnotised the newspapers of Perth, but also the Premier and the Under Secretary for Mines. In contra-

diction to this, we have the report of the Mines Department itself, which shows that the progress has been steady and that the industry was never in a more flourishing condition. That report altogether gives the lie to the assertions made as to the rates of wages having had such a deleterious influence on the mining industry. The member for Dundas has stated that the return for 1902 does not show such a great increase in the number of men employed as the progress of the industry should warrant. I would point out to hon. members that before 1902 there was a large amount of work going on upon the fields, especially in the East Coolgardie District, in the erection of mining plants, which created employment for a large number of surface men; but the erection of these plants being now completed, the result is that many of these men are out of employment. I undertake to say that if the number of men employed under-ground in the gold-mining industry were compared with the number employed in 1901, a marked increase would be shown, commensurate with the strides which the industry undoubtedly has made. We have also particulars of the dividends which have been paid in connection with W.A. mines, to guide us in our estimate as to whether the mining industry is flourishing or not. We find that during 1902 the sum of £1,423,000 was paid, giving an average for the half-year of £711,000. For the first six months of the present year the amount paid in dividends was £911,000, which for the half-year shows an increase of £200,000. This will show that the capitalist, at least, is not losing by the awards of the Arbitration Court. Reference has been made to the fact that Labour members have conducted cases before the Arbitration Court; and it has been stated that it is wrong for members of this House to represent one class against another or one man against another. At present we have members in this House who are lawyers, and who every day of their life possibly represent one class of the community against another or one man against another; and is that taken as a reason why they cannot sit in this House and act judicially and impartially on matters that come before us? I would also point out that those members who have represented the workers before

the Arbitration Court have been there for the purpose of protecting the workers rather than attempting to deal harshly with the other side, because we know that up to date every case brought before the Arbitration Court by the workers has been in protest against a reduction of wages, and not asking for an increase of wages. Not only is that true, but I desire also to say that we strongly protest against the mining industry being degraded by misrepresentations of the real state of affairs. I have before me a comparative statement of the Chamber of Mines showing the rates of wages ruling before and after the awards of the Arbitration Court. That is in a note in the very smallest of print at the foot of a page, and is as follows:—

Owing to the divergence in the rates paid by the several mines on the Kalgoorlie field prior to the arbitration award, the minimum of such rates has been inserted in the above table.

It would be as justifiable for me, in drawing up a table, to take the maximum rates as it is for the chamber to place a report in that way before the public. I say it is misleading; and we were perfectly justified, not only for protecting the mining industry but for the protection of the whole community, in publishing a contradiction of inaccuracies made in that statement by leading mine owners. If comparison is made between the average rates ruling before and after the awards were given, any disinterested observer will find that there has been no increase in wages except in one or two isolated instances where special circumstances justified increases. The only thing done was that, perhaps there was a levelling up in some instances and a levelling down in others, to obtain a more uniform rate. One feature in regard to the 1902 report of the Mines Department, which will be gratifying to members and those who have the interests of Western Australia at heart, is the large number of State batteries established, and the fact that they have induced a large number of what we may call working proprietors to embark in the mining industry, to the advantage of the State even more perhaps than would result from the introduction of many more times the amount of working capital from outside, because whatever profits are made by these men

will be spent in the State. I am glad to learn from the Speech that during the Session we shall have a Mining Bill and a Machinery Bill introduced, and I hope that when the Mining Bill is introduced we will be able to insert provisions which will encourage the working prospector, and so encourage the whole industry. Reference has been made to the increase in the population; and members, in criticising the remarks of the member for Kanowna, have stated that evidently the hon. member (Mr. Hastie) did not desire an increase in our population, and that he and the Labour members seemed to regard an increase in population as a bad thing for the community. As far as the occupants of this bench are concerned, nothing is farther from our thoughts. We are of opinion that the progress of the State should be gradual and steady. We hold the opinion that feverish bursts of prosperity are often followed by periods of depression in which the State receives a great blow. What we desire is that with the growth and development of the mining, agricultural, and other resources of the State, the population should increase accordingly; and we think if that is so we shall avoid those periods in which we have so many unemployed, and when consequent depression is felt very keenly. Comparison has been made between the positions of Canada and Australia in this respect; but I venture to say that if the rate of increase in population throughout the other States of Australia were the same as the rate of increase in Western Australia, the total increase would compare very favourably with Canada, taking into consideration the position of the two Commonwealths in regard to their natural resources and the quantity of good land available for settlement. Reference is made in the Speech, in rather a brief form, to constitutional and electoral reform; and I regret to see there are members in this House who have so little consideration for the Assembly to which they belong, and for the constituencies which sent them here, that they practically hint to the Legislative Council that the Council should place obstacles in the way of this Assembly securing a measure of constitutional and electoral reform. If our solicitude for the Upper House goes to such extent as that, we

should forego many of the privileges we enjoy. I would rather see those members to whom I refer translated to the Upper House, than that their opinions should be a bar to those measures which the country desires. A question not touched on by other members is that of railway administration. We find the Colonial Treasurer has been congratulating himself and the State upon the splendid financial position. I am one of those who believe that the State should raise sufficient taxation to pay its way in a legitimate manner, provide a sinking fund for its loans, and avoid as much as possible continually going to the home market to borrow money for carrying on our public works policy. If we do raise a large revenue, it necessitates extra care and vigilance on the part of those charged with the administration of that revenue. In regard to the administration of the railways, I cannot join with the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott) in congratulating the Commissioner for Railways upon his conduct of that system. During the past year, reckless extravagance has been indulged in. The Chief Mechanical Engineer, by discarding engines which have proved of good service to the Western Australian railways, and which at the present time if properly looked after would be in still good working order, is acting in a manner which is placing the railway revenue on a very unsatisfactory basis. In my opinion, he seems to be a faddist of the worst description, and in that way is involving the country in great expense by introducing new engines which are not proved to possess the advantage he claims for them. I presume he is amenable to the Commissioner for Railways in regard to the portion of the department which he controls. If so, the Commissioner is not doing his duty in not seeing that that portion of the department is more wisely administered. If we turn to the statistics for the June month in regard to the cost of construction and the financial results of the railways of Western Australia, it will be found that the net financial result for the year, taking the interest on cost and working traffic conjointly, shows that the percentage on the cost of construction is '16, compared with '92 in 1901, and compared with 2'36 in 1900. Not only that, but the profit on working the traffic shows a considerable decrease. I regret

we have not the full report of the Commissioner for Railways before us, so that we may see which lines are providing the profit and which are being worked at a loss. I have no hesitation in saying that the profit from working the goldfields lines has to make up the loss on the lines in agricultural districts. In the past the people on the goldfields have not growled to any great extent because this profit is being devoted to this purpose, for they are of opinion that the country must, in the long run, rely on its agricultural resources therefore they are doing all they can to see that the agricultural resources are developed while the country is in a state of prosperity. But it is too much to expect that when the agricultural industry has received an impetus, the agricultural lines should continue to be worked at a loss at the expense of the goldfields railways. There is one thing I wish to impress upon the Premier, and it is that, hand in hand with settlement on the agricultural lands of the State, there should be some more scientific mode of bringing the producer into more direct touch with the consumer. A great deal of money has been expended in providing facilities for the agricultural producer, but we find that the people on the goldfields do not benefit thereby, although they pay a considerable amount to the revenue which is received through the customs to provide the money for giving facilities to the agriculturists. I think the Premier might go into the question and see if the producer cannot be brought into closer touch with the consumer without the middleman taking a share of the profit as he does to-day. [MR. JACOBY: How would you do it?] If I were inclined to remain here for an hour or two I might instruct the hon. member somewhat on that question; but at present I am not prepared to do that. With regard to public education, I do not think there is anything to criticise in the proposals of the Premier as contained in the Speech, because I think he is sincere in his desire that a higher education should be provided for those who are not in a position to pay a large amount of money for it. But my experience of the position of the higher grade education in the Eastern States has been that in the long run, notwithstanding the safeguards which

have been provided, ultimately the higher grade education is exclusively monopolised by the wealthy classes. We cannot be expected in this community to tax ourselves to provide a higher class of education for people who can provide it for themselves, having sufficient wealth to do so, while others are practically precluded from the benefits of this education. During the discussions on the proposed industrial legislation contained in the Speech, we had a diatribe from the member for West Kimberley as to the evil results of so-called socialistic legislation. One would have imagined the hon. member was addressing a House of men who were in their second childhood, when he uttered the old-time arguments about the disadvantages of social legislation. He also stated that he would have liked a little touch of "Irvineism" in the programme of the Premier. I hope we shall never see the day in Western Australia when we have a Ministry which includes a Minister for Lands who takes advantage of the necessities of his State to aggrandise himself at the expense of a drought-stricken community. I hope in Western Australia we shall never have a Ministry which includes a Minister who defrauds the public revenue. I hope we shall never have in Western Australia a Minister who utters sentiments, and utters them in such a vulgar way as were uttered in Victoria by the Minister for Railways during recent events there. If we have that kind of thing transplanted in Western Australia, it will be a bad day for this community. It does not seem as if this anti-socialistic policy of the Premier of Victoria is one that is going to be so productive of good for Australia—for it has not been productive of good for Victoria—when we find that during the first quarter of the year the Government Statist estimates that Victoria lost by sea and land 1,172 persons to other portions of the Commonwealth, and 1,767 persons to other countries; and even in the daily newspapers which support the policy of the Premier of Victoria, there are accounts written in a very gloomy strain as to the class of men leaving the shores of Victoria. Contrast the position of Victoria in this respect with the position of the Colony of New Zealand, which is far and away ahead of any country in the world

as far as so-called socialistic legislation is concerned. There they have prosperity on every hand. On the other side, in Victoria we have persons taking the first opportunity to get out of the country, and we have the Government closing up lines through what are considered good agricultural lands because those lines will not pay. Victoria wants some of the statesmen who have made New Zealand what it is to-day. The Government of Victoria should either make the lands available to the public or place a tax on them in such a manner that those who own them will make them available to the public. When they have close settlement on these lands we shall soon find if the railways make a profit or a loss. I hope, as far as Western Australia is concerned, we shall avoid a policy of that description. What we want in the country is that the best land, that which enjoys a good rainfall and has market facilities, shall be occupied by a large closely-settled population; then we shall find the railways which provide facilities for conveying the produce to market will pay. We shall find that industries will be established to supply their wants, and we shall find Western Australia, in the same way as New Zealand, will profit by the experience. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott), in referring to factories legislation as socialistic legislation, knew very little of the subject with which he was dealing. If he had studied the question of factory legislation in the Australian States, in New Zealand, or in the older lands, he would have seen things in a very different light. It is accepted by the chief political economists of the day that England has the best and most complete system of factory laws in the world at the present time; and if anyone in the old country uttered the sentiments which were uttered by the member for West Kimberley as to the evil effects of factory legislation, he would have been laughed at. Show me the country that safeguards the interests of the workers and attempts to place them on a high plane, and I will show you the country that is progressing and that is in a highly civilised state. On the other hand, show me the land where the working population is in a state of degradation and misery, and I will show you a country which is low down in the

scale. To paraphrase the well-known lines by Tennyson,

Better fifty sons of Briton than a thousand of Cathay.

Too much stress has been laid on the quantity of the population rather than the quality. What we want is good citizens; not too many citizens. There are many States sparse in population which stand head and shoulders above States that number their citizens by thousands while other States only number them by tens. What we want to do in Western Australia is not to wait until the house is on fire before we insure, but to profit by the experience of other states, and place safeguards against evils occurring, and allowing them to go on unrestricted. This House will be well advised if when factory legislation comes before it members will not be led away by shibboleths. If members will profit by the experience of others, they will agree that we in Western Australia find it necessary to have this factory legislation to protect the lives of children, of women, and of men; to safeguard the interests of the community, and prevent a great portion of the population sinking into the depths of degradation and misery which are such a blot on our present-day civilisation.

MR. H. TEESDALE SMITH (Wellington): I take this opportunity with other members of congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your return to the Chair; and I trust during this session you will be restored completely to your former health. I think the Premier is to be congratulated on his reference to the closer relations with the old country. I believe the step the Secretary of State has taken in giving this big question farther consideration is one that will meet with the general approval of Australia and the rest of the British possessions. I noticed particularly, when in England three years ago, that numbers of factories had been closed up and were not working: the reason I was told was, the business had been removed to other countries where industries are protected and looked after; and it appealed to me that if France and Germany could and did protect these industries to such extent so as to draw them from the old country, surely it was time for England to retaliate to some extent. And although the member for Dundas

takes the Premier to task for publishing this as the opinion of the State, I consider that every man who has an opportunity of expressing his views should say distinctly whether he is for or against the proposal. Another matter of great importance to this State is the Trans-Australian Railway. How South Australia can be opposed to this line is past my comprehension; for as far as I can see, she will for many years to come derive more benefit from it than us. All the produce and the live-stock from her northern areas can be brought to our goldfields markets by this line more cheaply and more advantageously than by water carriage; and it will be proved that, given a first-class line built on up-to-date principles, the passenger traffic and goods traffic will warrant its construction. Passengers travelling from the Eastern States to catch the boat at Fremantle will, in my opinion, break the journey in Adelaide; whereas now, coming from Melbourne, Sydney, or Brisbane, they go from the Adelaide railway station straight to the boat; therefore South Australia will in that respect be a gainer. I have made some brief calculations, and believe that produce can be delivered on our goldfields from the northern areas of South Australia at about 30s. a ton, and that live stock can be brought thence at not much more than half the cost of bringing it by boat, with the attendant risks. This railway should be built with easy grades. I notice that the engineers recommend 1 in 80. In my opinion it should be built on grades not steeper than 1 in 100, with a 4ft. 8½ in. gauge. No doubt if South Australia is of opinion that we may block the introduction of her live stock and produce, we can conciliate her by stipulating that, for say five years, certain rates shall not be exceeded. I think that proposal would meet with the approval of this State and the Federal Parliament. I have made a rough estimate of the cost of this line, and believe that a first-class railway can be built for about £4,000 per mile. The working expenses also, which I have roughly calculated, run out at about £120,000 per annum and the takings at £228,000, thus leaving about £100,000 towards interest and sinking fund. As a measure of defence there is no doubt the

Federal Government should subsidise the line to the extent of perhaps one half or one per cent., so that the loss would for the first three or four years be very small indeed, and would ultimately altogether disappear. The Government are to be complimented on the appointment of the Royal Commission on Forestry. There is no doubt this Commission will do immense good; and I believe it will disabuse the public mind of misconceptions as to the waste of timber and the excessive charges made by the combination of timber millers. The Commission have recently been making some extensive experiments; and when they have facts and details before them it will be shown that their appointment was well warranted. I regret exceedingly that the Government did not act on my suggestion made some months ago that a trial should be given in this country to the light railway system. I am of opinion that the Malcolm-Laverton railway could have been built from beginning to end for less money than the present section alone is being constructed for; that is to say, a line to carry traffic up to a speed of about 18 miles an hour, without ballast, and following the contour of the earth, could have been built for about £650 per mile, exclusive of rails. Another anomaly in this contract is that possession of the rails has to be taken in Fremantle, a sum of about £10,000 being required for this purpose; and another is that steel or iron girders are to be used in this railway instead of timber. Our timber companies are now sending timbers to India, England, South Africa, South America, Manila, and China, for bridge building; and on the other hand we are bringing steel or iron girders to Western Australia to build bridges. This is a bad advertisement for the country's timbers. We advertise them as superior to any others for this particular purpose, yet we do not use them ourselves. Of course the Working Railways Branch will doubtless object to the introduction of light railways; but these have been adopted with great success in New South Wales, where in the dry northern areas they have been found to answer every purpose for which they were built; and I trust the Government will insist on any future railways, such as feeders to the main lines or extensions where the traffic

is not heavy, being of this light construction.

MR. JACOBY: Will that involve a break of gauge?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: No; 3ft. 6in. gauge, but built on the natural surface of the earth. The Collie railway, however, should not be built in this way. Only in one way can that line be made remunerative. If coal is to be carried cheaply, it will be necessary that the line be built on as easy grades as can be found, with very heavy rails and good ballast. With such a line, coal put on the trucks at the pit's mouth at 8s. or 9s. a ton can be landed at Kalgoorlie for about £1 a ton or less. Within the next three, four, or five years the fuel on the fields will become very expensive, and this line will take three or four years to build. There is some talk of the Government duplicating the line from Midland Junction to Kalgoorlie. This would be a waste and a needless expense. If the Collie-Goldfields railway is built, it will take all the fuel, all the timber, and a good deal of the produce for the goldfields, and will do away with the necessity for duplicating the whole of the Eastern Railway. I say that railway should be duplicated from Boorabbin to Coolgardie, thus obviating the necessity for duplicating from Boorabbin to Midland Junction. At the present time I am not in accord with the Premier's desire to lay down a broad gauge to Kalgoorlie immediately. I say he should, if he can get it, take authority to build that line; but until the Federal Parliament get the consent of South Australia and pass a Bill, he should not attempt to alter the gauge and create a break-of-gauge difficulty.

THE PREMIER: There is no such intention.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I am pleased to hear it. I took it that the Premier intended to show his *bona fides* by building this line straight away; and I find I am wrong. The line will go through some of the finest agricultural land in the State of Western Australia. I have roughly computed the produce which will be carried on that line within a few years after its construction at about 500,000 tons per annum; that is, allowing half the land to lie in fallow and cultivating the other half only. And if 500,000 tons of produce does not warrant

the line, I do not know what should warrant it. The member for Dundas talked about 600 or 1,000 people at Norseman as against a similar number to be benefited elsewhere by the Minister for Lands. The hon. member forgets that the 600 or 1,000 people on the land between Collie and the Great Southern Railway are producing something for the railways to carry. On the other hand, those people at Norseman are not producing anything that the railways can carry.

THE PREMIER: What route would you suggest for the Collie-Goldfields line?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I should run it right through to Boorabbin.

THE PREMIER: Where would you intersect the Great Southern?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I should run the line as straight as I could, irrespective of where it crossed the Great Southern. Make the line as short as possible, and take it to Boorabbin or thereabout.

THE PREMIER: Would Wagin or Narrogin be the best point.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Go straight through. I do not think the Premier has made out quite such a good case for the Jandakot Railway, although that railway would considerably benefit me and my company. Even if the Government have the money to construct the line, I think there are other works on which it could be spent with more advantage to the State.

At 6:30, the **SPEAKER** left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH (continuing): The Government are to be congratulated on their decision to extend the breakwater at Bunbury. The timber industry, it may be admitted, is the second in this State, second only to the gold-mining industry. When you consider the outlay necessary to carry on this industry, as against the outlay necessary in the gold-mining industry, the timber industry is more important. There are some 20,000 men employed on the goldfields, with a working plant of about four millions of money, whereas in the timber industry there are some 4,000

men employed, with a working plant of about one and a-half millions. There are about 200,000 tons of timber to be shipped from Bunbury annually, as far as I can see, and this will require about 200 ships. It is awful to contemplate what a disaster may happen there at any moment, as when a north-west storm is blowing, one of the ships might break away to windward, and bearing down on the others cause a disaster such as this State would take years to get over. If the member for Dundas said we are building Bunbury harbour as a national work, I say that although it may be a national work, it is a self-supporting one. At the present time the Bunbury harbour returns 9 to 10 per cent. per annum on the money expended, and there is no doubt that with the improved facilities that will be provided at Bunbury, better returns will accrue. I am sorry that the Government could not bring in a more encouraging report when dealing with the question of the management of the railways. If ever there was a case of damning with faint praise, I think His Excellency's Speech does this. So long as the present management is in the hands of the dictator who runs the railways of this State, so long in my opinion will this poor return be presented to Parliament. When the late régime was abolished, there was no stronger supporter of the scheme for a board of commissioners than I. I debated the question with a good many members outside of the House, and I was of the opinion that a board of commissioners was the correct mode of controlling the department. I will prove to this House, if members will bear with me, that I was a staunch and strong supporter of that scheme of management, and that I gave the present Commissioner my undivided support. I regret that to-night I am in the humiliating position of having to withdraw that support. I regret also that I have to make an attack upon a man apparently behind his back; but from the facts that I will place before this House, members will be able to see for themselves whether my attack is warranted or not, and to this end I will leave myself in your hands. In supporting the present Commissioner's appointment to his position, I took the line that three commissioners should be appointed, and that one of these three should be Mr.

George. In speaking to the question I said:—

I have heard every member on the Opposition side of the House pronounce Mr. George absolutely honest. He is undoubtedly a man of unbounded energy, of a high degree of enthusiasm, and a great range of capacity. What more do hon. members ask in a man to take charge of our railways? Do they want an expert? In what respect do hon. members want the manager of our railway system to be an expert? Is he to be an expert in mechanical engineering, or in civil engineering, or in traffic management? [Mr. Connor: An expert in general management.] It takes a man a lifetime to become an expert in either civil or mechanical engineering, or in traffic management, and yet hon. members want Mr. George to be three experts in one. In my opinion the Ministry have done right in appointing Mr. George one of three Commissioners. He is supposed to be equal, even in the eyes of the Opposition, to a third of a man.

That was my position, and that was the line of argument I took. The member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) in dealing with the question said that in Victoria three Commissioners had been tried and found wanting. Now, in that State they have gone back and found that one Commissioner has been found wanting, just the same as we have in this State. The Premier said that twelve months was not a sufficient time for a Commissioner to show exactly what he could do. I say that is an absurd statement to make. If he had said that twelve months was not a sufficient time for a man to learn his business, and expected this State to put up with a Commissioner who had to learn his business for the next six or seven years—which, I take it, is only a reasonable time for a man to obtain this knowledge—then we would have known exactly where we were; but for the Premier to say that the Commissioner would be able to show a better result shortly is a hard thing to ask members to swallow. Anyone who has had dealings with the Railway Department for the last twelve months must know, and does know, how irritating and annoying it is to have to go to the Commissioner's room to carry out even the smallest necessary duty in connection with his business. One thing which I had thought the Commissioner would have been able to do better than another was to give a reply to questions asked of him as to business transactions coming before him; but in nine or ten months of intimate

dealings with the department, I have come to the conclusion that he is absolutely void of ordinary business capacity. When speaking on Mr. George's appointment, I distinctly laid down the proposition that he should be one of three Commissioners. I could always see that, with his brusque arrogance, he would not be a success in dealing with the public. As far as I can see, this has proved to be a fact. I will try and show three different phases of his character, by correspondence which I will shortly give to the House. As to his procrastination, his ignorance and arrogance and also unreasonableness, I will give instances. On the 29th November, 1902, the Commissioner was written to by me with reference to conveying logs by train from Mullalyup to Newlands. The letter stated:—

The company desires to supply Newlands Mill with logs from timber leases to the north of Mullalyup, and inquires what charge the Commissioner would make for granting the company the privilege of using the Bridgetown Railway in this connection, stating that if the privilege were granted the Government railway would be constantly used for many years to come, but that in case of a refusal the company would build a line of its own.

On December 2nd the Commissioner wrote stating that inquiries would be made at once, and that if possible the company's wish would be met. That is the last communication I have had from the Commissioner on the subject! I saw him on several occasions and tried to get him to give a decision, but he refused, saying his officers were against granting the request. I said, "Mr. George, we are at the present time employing and working the self-same system between Torbay Junction and Albany that I want you to introduce on the Bridgetown line." He replied, "I do not see anything against it, but I will see my officers." I saw him some time afterwards, with the same result; and the third time I said, "Surely you are appointed here to give a final decision. Your officers are not managing the business. It is supposed to be you. Surely you are not going to hang me up for all time. I want a decision." He replied, "I will look into it again;" and he has been doing that ever since, with the result that the mill had to be closed down and 150 men and their teams disposed of. That is one instance of the

Commissioner's procrastination. It is provided in the New South Wales rate books for trains to run on companies' or Government lines; provision is also made in Victoria for contractors' trains. We were asking nothing that was out of the common, and it was only what is being done at the present time in this State. Another instance of his procrastination. On the 14th October, 1902, I wrote to the Commissioner for Railways applying for a siding to be put in at our yard at Lord Street. I sent a sketch and asked for an estimate of the cost. Although it is nine months since Mr. George had that sketch and the letter from me, I have not had a word in reply. To work our timber business properly it is necessary for another siding to be put into the Lord Street yard, and with that object I wrote and asked him to let me know how, when, and at what cost they would put in the siding, but up to date I have had no reply. That is nine months ago. I ask the House is it a fair thing for business people to be hung up, in carrying out their works, by the Railway Commissioner? Another case which I will quote is one showing ignorance combined with arrogance. A private siding was put in at Bunbury by the Railway Department many years ago, which was known as Port's Siding. From this siding, an old line used to run round the back of the town and on to the jetty. Some years afterwards the department decided that this main line should be diverted and taken up the streets of Bunbury, and a back shunt put in from the line into Port's Siding. Some years afterwards another diversion was made; the line going round the streets was pulled up and taken round the foreshore; and instead of backing into Port's Siding, it ran straight into the siding. As far as the siding is concerned it always remained in the same place. Some repairs were required to the siding. We had a debit note for the repair of this line, also a debit note for the repair of the long length of main line which connected with Millars' and Port's sidings—about 10 chains of it. A debit note was sent for these repairs. I accompanied Mr. Port to Mr. George's office and explained the position. Mr. George said, "Your contention seems reasonable. I will send to the Engineer for Existing Lines."

The engineer came along and brought the plan, Mr. Sargeant being with him. We examined the plan and I said, "I object to pay for the 10 chains outside our line, as Robert Forrest uses that line for unloading coal and loading flour from his mill: it has nothing to do with us." Mr. George said, "I will look into the matter." I said, "Don't look into it; settle it at once. You pay for the main line and I will pay for our siding. The men will not shunt the trucks into the siding. Let us fix the matter up." He said, "No; I will look into it," and he did look into it. This is how it ended. On the 23rd January, this is some considerable time afterwards, I wrote to the Commissioner of Railways as follows:—

Some considerable time ago Mr. J. Port, manager of the Jarrah Wood and Paving Corporation, and myself interviewed you with reference to the disabilities we were suffering in connection with our siding at Bunbury. Up to date nothing has been done with your main line approach to the siding, and we are still compelled to push our trucks from where they are left by the Government loco. into our siding. We are debiting your department with the cost of this work, and it now amounts to something like £40 odd, and as there are about 10 chains only of main line which requires repairing, it is incomprehensible to us why the department neglects to put this road into such order that the locomotives can travel over it. The approach to our siding has absolutely nothing whatever to do with us, and we cannot understand Mr. Dartnall's contention that we should keep it in repair. As a matter of fact, if we were to put men on to lift the rails, the chances are that we would be taken up for trespass. We shall be glad if you will see that this matter is attended to at once, as when we come to square up accounts we know that there will be friction and irritation in getting a settlement.—MILLARS' KARRI AND JARRAH CO. (1902), LTD.

When the Commissioner received that letter he rung up the telephone and got me. He said, "Are you there?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Who wrote me that impertinent letter?" I said, "What impertinent letter?" (I had forgotten this letter.) He said, "The impertinent letter I got the other day." I said, "If you got a letter I suppose I dictated it, but there was no intention at offence." I added, "What is the matter with it?" He replied, "I will not allow you or anyone else to address me like that; and don't do it again;" and he rung off the

telephone. On the 29th January he wrote me in this way :—

Referring to your letter of the 23rd inst., I have to say :—The debit you state you are raising will not be accepted by this department, and is hereby declined.

THE PREMIER : Hear, hear.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH : The letter goes on :—

It is not unreasonable, and is quite in accordance with the terms under which the siding has been held, that the maintenance shall be borne by you.

"Hear, hear," again, I suppose? The letter proceeds :—

As the department has no longer any use for the long siding referred to, I hereby give you notice that it is my intention to close it up at the expiry of three months from date hereof.

He can do that under the agreement. He can cancel any siding on giving three months' notice.

THE PREMIER : It is only used for the purpose of your siding, Port's siding, and Forrest's siding.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH : It is the main line. I will show you what Mr. George thought eventually, notwithstanding the Premier, who is giving himself away. The letter goes on to say :—

Should, however, you desire to continue to use the siding, I shall have no objection to enter into negotiation with you, but the *sine qua non* will be that no farther trouble will be caused to the department in connection with the cost of maintenance. I regret very much if any inconvenience has been caused to your company, and I hope that such comparatively trivial matters of disagreement can be settled without irritation on either side. I want your business with the department to increase, and I have no desire to unduly impose cost upon you. It is imperative that there should be a uniform custom throughout the system, and I cannot have any distinction between one siding and another.—I have the honour to be, Wm. J. GEORGE, Commissioner of Railways.

Very civil and very nice! On 4th February, 1903, I wrote to Mr. George as follows :—

In reference to your letter W.R. 458/1903, dated 29th January, with reference to our siding at Bunbury, and dealing seriatim with the paragraphs :—(1.) We feel quite certain of this, that if you put us to any extra expense you are too fair-minded to refuse to recoup us for our outlay. (2.) It is unreasonable to ask us to pay for this maintenance, and is not in accordance with the siding agreement, which distinctly states that the lessee shall pay the cost of the maintenance of his siding—that is, the portion he uses, and not the approaches.

This long length of line, which at one time formed part of the main approach to the old jetty, is not a portion of our siding, nor have we any control over it. (3.) If you carry out your intention of closing up the long siding above referred to, the effect will be exactly the opposite to what you desire in paragraph 5, in which you say that you want our business with the department to increase. (4.) It is not, as you are well aware, a question of the £2 or £3 cost of putting this length of line in repair that we are objecting to, but it is one of principle, as we have sidings in numerous places, and if it were established that the approaches had to be maintained by the siding holder simply because his siding happened to be at the end of the section, we would have the department demanding maintenance for the whole of the line outside the Bunbury or other station yards; and on these grounds alone do we object to pay the amount of money that has been found by you to be due from us for something which has never been asked for before, or even thought of. You also state that it is imperative that there should be a uniform custom throughout the system, and in this we entirely agree; but if you will look up the siding agreement, you will see that it is provided in the same that the siding holder shall pay for the maintenance of his own siding and his siding only.—Yours faithfully, MILLARS' KARRI & JARRAH Co. (1902), LTD.

On the 11th February I got this letter :—

In reply to your letter of the 4th inst., I have the honour to inform you that I have visited the siding at Bunbury, and as I find that the other people have a partial use of the long arm outside your fence, I withdraw the charge for maintenance on that portion against your company.

That is what the Premier said he ought not to have done.

THE PREMIER : He ought to have made you pay at least one-third of the cost.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH : The Premier has as much right to say I should maintain the line from East Perth station yard to Bunbury as to say we should maintain that portion of the line down there.

THE PREMIER : Oh, no.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH : The Premier will not admit that; but it is an absolute fact. The letter continues—

and in future you will have to pay for the maintenance of the siding within your boundary only, and paragraph 3 of my letter 30th January is cancelled.—I have the honour to be, Wm. J. GEORGE, Commissioner of Railways.

It is absurd and wretched to have to keep on battling and fighting day in and

day out with the Commissioner of Railways, backed up by the Premier.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear; I will back him up again.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: After we get these things settled, I receive this notice from the Existing Lines Department:—

I have certified that your siding at Bunbury is fit for traffic, but engines must not pass the first set of points in your company's yard, and it will be necessary for your company to provide a notice board with lettering as follows: "Engines must not be taken past this board." Will you please arrange for the required notice board to be provided at the earliest.

We pay for maintenance, get everything settled up, then the engines are not allowed to do the work. Here is another instance of the Commissioner's inability to grapple with a common every-day matter that occurs on the railways. Some few months ago we had occasion to bring an engine and some trucks loaded with machinery from Albany to Worsley. I saw the Commissioner and asked him to fix a rate for this business. In the Western Australian rate book there is a rate on page 52, applying to Government contractors' trains which can be run at the rate of 2s. 6d. per mile. I asked the Commissioner to let that rate apply, as there was no class in the rate book, and he said he would not do it. I said, "Mr. George, it is done everywhere else: why can't you do it?" He said, "I will not allow it to be done." With that I had to be content and go away. Notwithstanding how I battled and argued with him, he decided he would not allow us to bring our own train from Torbay Junction, but that the engine would have to go up light. Mr. George wrote this letter:—

I am not prepared to convey (engine and loaded trucks) at the rate provided for railway contractors' plant. The locomotive and wagons may, however, be conveyed at the rates and under the conditions mentioned on page 52 of the Merchandise Rate Book, under the heading of "Locomotive Engines, Railway Carriage, and Wagons." The material may be loaded in these wagons and charged for at classification rates, less the usual allowance for goods conveyed in sender's wagons.

I ask the House to follow me in this matter. On page 52 is a reference to Government railway contractors' trains, and the class under which contractors can take their trains from one part of the

system to another. There is also on the same page that locomotive engines, railway wagons, and carriages can be taken from place to place. It is important to notice this, because the Commissioner goes behind this regulation and refers to that dealing with railway contractors' trains, under which regulation I asked him to let me run my engine, etc. Bringing the engine up alone is provided for in this clause:—

Locomotive engines and tenders on their own wheels, 1d. per ton per mile, station to station, minimum charge 10s. Locomotives, engines, and tenders (not on their own wheels), loaded on railway wagons: class I.O.R.S.S., half rates when running under steam and in good running order. Minimum, 10s.

And underneath I read:—

All engines, wagons, etc., must be examined and passed at the expense of the senders by the Locomotive Engineer before being allowed to run.

We received a letter from the Traffic Department demanding £25 for examination fees. Well, as it would take an engine-driver from half an hour to an hour to examine the engine, I thought the charge of £25 rather excessive, and declined to pay it until I was given particulars of what it was for. As to this, I wrote as follows to the Commissioner on the 17th March, 1903:—

In reply to your letter W.R. 1167/03, we would respectfully request that you would reconsider your decision as conveyed in your letter under review. In asking you to fix a rate per train mile for our engine and trucks loaded from Albany to Worsley, we were only asking you to grant what has been allowed in other States times without number. From your letter it would appear that we did not make ourselves perfectly clear to you in our request. What we wished to convey was this, that we have an engine in good working order, and wagons in first-class order, which we wish to load with material, and we wish our engine to haul this material from Albany to its destination. It appears to us that we did not make ourselves clear, because you quote conditions under which this plant can be brought up as provided for on page 52, which has no bearing on the case, as under those conditions you do all the haulage of our trucks and we would have to run our engine "light," whereas we wish, as the engine is coming up, to do the haulage ourselves, and to pay you a reasonable rate for the use of your permanent way and staff. We shall be glad if you can give this matter your immediate attention, as the material is ready to come away.

To this the Commissioner replied that he understood me perfectly well, and was

quite aware of what I wanted, but was not prepared to grant it. So we started the engine away by herself; and at Perth I received this letter, dated 30th March, from the Chief Traffic Manager's office :

The loco. examination charges in connection with transfer of engine from Albany to Worsley amount to £25, and I shall be glad if you will forward cheque for that amount per bearer, or instruct re collection at Albany.
—JOHN T. SHORT.

In reply to that I wrote to Mr. Short:—

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of even date re loco. examination charges in connection with transfer of engine from Albany to Worsley, and we shall be glad if you will kindly send us a detailed account showing how you make up the amount, £25.

From the Commissioner's office I received this reply:—

Re Transmission of Locomotives.—Referring to your Mr. Teesdale Smith's call upon me yesterday, and the conversation afterwards through the telephone, both having reference to the transmission of locomotives from one part of your works to another via a Government line, I wish to say that it is distinctly laid down in our Rate Book as to the conditions under which these locomotives can travel; and although you have raised the point that the charges on the locomotive engines, railway carriages, and wagons, on page 52 should cover all pilotage, etc., you must be fully aware from your previous experience with these railways that no engines can be permitted to pass along the Government railways unless in charge of a pilot, whose wages and expenses it is only just should be charged to the person for whose service the expense is incurred.

I asked him to let me bring up my rolling-stock as a "Government railway contractor's train," mentioned on page 52 of the rate book, wherein it is indicated that the sender shall provide a pilot. The Commissioner says: "No; you cannot bring it up under the clause dealing with locomotives, engines, railway carriages, and wagons, which does not provide for a pilot, but does provide for an examination fee." Now he goes behind that and refers me to page 52, the provision for "Government contractors' trains, and leaves the other point altogether. His letter proceeds:—

If you will refer to the conditions, it is stated under "Government Railway Contractors' Trains" that men in charge of engines have to give satisfactory proof of their general fitness, and that the department finds pilots in all cases, whose wages and expenses are to be paid by the contractors, and the same clause applies to the whole of the rates which

have reference to the transit of rolling-stock belonging to other than the Government railways.

THE PREMIER: Are you complaining of an overcharge?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: If I am told that this rate book imposes a charge of 1d. per ton per mile, I expect to pay 1d. a ton. If you say I have to pay pilotage, though in the clause permitting me to bring up a locomotive you do not stipulate for the payment of pilotage, I shall say it is not provided for, and shall refuse to pay it. Surely you cannot charge me for something which does not exist. As a fact, bringing up the locomotive under steam involves a charge of £18; while the examination fees demanded in this letter were £25.

THE PREMIER: Was there a pilot engine used in this case?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Not a pilot engine, but a pilot man. Engines, locomotives, trucks, vans, and all other rolling-stock, and coal also, are carried at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton per mile, and good money is made out of it; yet, when my company do the whole work, you charge us $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton per mile and want an extra five-eighths of a penny per mile for examination fees.

THE PREMIER: To what do you object?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I object to the Commissioner asking for any pilotage fees under that clause. In discussing this matter with the Commissioner per telephone he had another row with me, and cut me off very shortly. His letter refers to this as follows:—

I had to take up with you rather strongly last evening in reference to the £6 for the engine between Yarloop and Wonnerup, and I wish to say that I am not desirous of anything of this sort happening again, as it can only tend to strained relations between yourself and myself, which is certainly not desirable in the interests of all concerned. The £25 which you were asked to pay in connection with the transfer of the locomotive from Denmark to Worsley should have been collected prior to the engine being allowed to proceed, and it was simply out of consideration for the urgency of your company's requirements in this respect that it was not insisted upon.

He is very solicitous about this; but he forgets the other things for which we waited for nine months.

These charges are not made as a source of profit to the department. They are regarded as a deposit sufficient to cover what the probable charges will be; and if when the work is

finished the sum paid is in excess of the actual cost, the difference would be refunded to you without any question. However, I find you paid £6, and that the engine has gone forward. I must now ask you to pay the £25 with regard to the other engine, and I will have the accounts made up at once and the matter can be adjusted, whichever way it comes out. For the future I have to inform you that I have instructed the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Chief Traffic Manager that in all instances they must collect their charges in advance, and I trust that with this knowledge you will be able to make your arrangements sufficiently early, so that if there is any question which you desire to thresh out it can be done before we do the work rather than afterwards.

The rate books of this and other States do not provide for prepayment of freight, and in making this charge I contend the Commissioner has altogether exceeded his powers.

THE PREMIER: Do you say he has no right to demand prepayment of freight?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I do. You cannot show me where it is provided that he can insist on this prepayment.

THE PREMIER: If you go to a store and ask for goods on credit, the proprietor can demand prepayment.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: If that store has £2,000 of my money to cover any goods I may get, I say I can demand £25 worth as against my credit of £2,000.

THE PREMIER: You could not enforce your demand.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Why not? What are our deposits with the Commissioner to cover, if not prepaid freights?

THE PREMIER: I say that under these regulations he is entitled to demand prepayment.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I cannot see where in this rate book, or in that of any other Australian State, prepayment is demanded. On the 8th April last, I wrote to the Commissioner:—

Locomotive Examination Fees.—We have to acknowledge your letter of 1st instant on this subject. As we understand the matter, the regulations published in the *Government Gazette* of 15th April, 1902 (page 1528), lay down that locomotive engines and railway carriages and wagons privately owned may be allowed to run over Government lines under certain conditions, one of which imposes on the sender payment of examination fees. The fact that fees for pilotage, etc., have been paid by us in the past has, in our opinion, no

bearing on the issue, since these fees have been paid invariably under protest. We are fully aware that you cannot allow our locomotives to travel over Government railways except under the charge of a Government official, but we contend that the fees fixed by the Regulations cover everything, including pilot's time. In our opinion you might just as reasonably ask us to pay for portion of station-master's or shunter's time as for pilotage. As regards the locomotives conveyed from Albany to Worsley, and from Yarloop to Wonnerup, we have no information as to how your department's charges are arrived at; we have been supplied merely with debit notes demanding £25 in the case of the former, and £6 in that of the latter engine. The fee of £6, claimed in respect of the engine which travelled from Yarloop to Wonnerup, was paid under protest, and accordingly we now request you to refund us £4 of the amount, since £2 would seem a fair charge for inspection. We understand that a departmental locomotive driver came up to Yarloop by the morning train from Bunbury, and that he spent about half an hour in looking round the engine, whence it appears that so far as inspection of the locomotive was concerned the driver might have returned to Bunbury by the train leaving Yarloop at about 1 p.m., losing not more than two-thirds of one day's time. We note your statement that you have instructed the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Chief Traffic Manager that they must henceforth, in every instance, collect their charges in advance. Seeing that all our traffic is well covered by bank deposits in the Commissioner's name, we do not consider it necessary or proper that we should be forced to proceed by way of claim when your department makes an excessive charge. We think we may fairly ask that all accounts due by us to the Railway Department shall be rendered in the usual fashion, whereupon if found correct they will be paid without demur or delay of any kind. If, on the other hand, we consider any charge excessive or not in accordance with the regulations under which the traffic of the State is carried on, then we think ourselves entitled to bring the matter before yourself or your responsible sub-heads. We repeat, it is unfair to force us into a position which enables you to say to us, practically, "This account must be paid irrespective of its reasonableness," leaving us no option except to pay or have our work stopped. The matter is of considerable importance to us, since we shall have a number of locomotives travelling to and from the Yarloop repairing shops. We therefore earnestly desire that an equitable basis may be fixed for the assessment of inspection charges, and we request you to consider whether you cannot draw up a scale based on the actual cost to your department of the work of inspection.

THE PREMIER: I gather from the early part of the letter that you had previously paid similar charges under protest?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Yes.

THE PREMIER: Then this was not a new charge?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: It was a new charge, so far as this rate book was concerned.

THE PREMIER: If you had previously paid such charges under protest, then it was not a new charge made by Mr. George.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: It is absolutely a new charge so far as this book is concerned; because he wrote to me that under the clause I have mentioned I could bring up my locomotives; and subsequently he went behind that and relied on another clause. Then we received this letter from Mr. Short:—

Referring to your application for engine "Noyes" to run Yarloop to Midland Junction and engine "Smith" Midland to Yarloop, I beg to inform you, in confirmation of my telephonic message of this morning, that the charges for the examination of the engine will be £4, and immediately this amount is paid to the Locomotive Department the examination will be proceeded with. There will be other charges in connection with the transit of the engine, of which you will be notified later. I am prepared to receive the amount above mentioned, viz., £4, on behalf of the Chief Mechanical Engineer.

They always made an examination fee, but never mentioned pilotage until the dispute started as to whether the cost was £25, £6, or £4 for the examination fee, which we said would not pay. On the 17th April I received another letter from Mr. Short as follows:—

With further reference to my letter of 14th inst., re transit of your engines "Noyes" and "Smith" between Yarloop and Midland Junction, I beg to inform you that I am still waiting to hear from you on the subject, and would draw your attention to the regulations bearing on the matter appearing on page 851 of *Government Gazette*, No. 22, issued on 10th inst., and shall be glad to have a settlement before any further action can be taken.

I think that the action of the Commissioner on this point is most reprehensible. No man, in my opinion, should be allowed to go to the Government when there are rate-book matters in dispute between any customer and the Railway Department, and get the Executive Council to bring out a regulation covering his misdeed. I say it is a scandal for the Commissioner to use his position to go to the Government and say, "This regulation is incorrect: I want you to alter it." What does that alteration mean to this State? It means that instead of paying a half-

penny per ton per mile, they must pay 1d. It was never contemplated that the action of the Commissioner should carry so far. It means that he can bring in a rate which is double the amount of the rate at present existing in the State, just by getting the Executive Council to pass what he considers to be right or wrong.

THE PREMIER: An increased rate would not apply to past services.

MR. T. SMITH: He tried to do it.

THE PREMIER: If he has as much trouble to collect all the railway debts as he evidently has with those you refer to, I do not wonder that he gets exasperated.

MR. T. SMITH: It is a wonder, if he treats others as he treats me, that any single soul in this State would ever venture into his office to discuss a matter of business with him. It is a disgrace that any business man should be subjected to the insults and opprobrium of being forced to go into the presence of a man like the Commissioner, and when a complaint is made, the Premier to back up the Commissioner. I should like the Premier to have some business with him, and try to do business under such conditions. It is very well for the Premier to sit in his office and smile, and back up the Commissioner; but let him have only a small business transaction with that official, and he would see what would happen. These are a few of the things I can bring before the House. They take a long time, and I am sorry I am occupying so much of the time of the House on business of this description; but something has to be done in trying to put a stop to the annoyance to which business people are subjected. The letters which I have read go to prove whether the Commissioner is right or I am right. It is no use begging the question. This regulation with regard to freights was gazetted, and also the one with regard to pilotage; but we knew nothing of them until I received letters from Mr. Short and from the station-master at Yarloop, five or six days after they had been promulgated. The station-master at Yarloop wrote:—

Re subject, engines to and from Yarloop and Midland Junction: The Chief Traffic Manager for Railways advises that no action whatever will be taken until charges are paid. New regulations on subject, issued last *Government Gazette*, require that freight in addition to all charges must be prepaid.

That is how we find that we are blocked ; and then, on 21st April, the Commissioner writes :—

In reply to your favour of the 8th April in reference to locomotive examination fees. I have the honour to say that I see no reason to depart from the ruling in regard to the payment of the fees on locomotives before they are permitted to travel over the departmental lines. I am quite aware that your company has a ledger account, and is of good financial standing. It is generally with those of similar status that the most trouble occurs in reference to these charges, as it appears to be considered that the standing of the firm gives a sort of warrant to the disputing of charges, which apply to every one in this State, irrespective of position. I have no desire whatever to charge you unfairly ; at the same time I am not prepared for the customers of this department to raise disputes as to the rating in the way that has been done. The conditions as to the conveyance of locomotives are practically the same all over the world on Government lines ; probably on private railways, where a sort of individual bargaining is permitted, there may be a difference. Now, in connection with the engine carried from Torbay to Worsley for which the sum of £25 was asked, this was requested so that there might be sufficient in hand to meet any possible expenditure ; but the charge is now reduced to £14, and I shall be glad if you will let me have a cheque for the same at your earliest convenience. It is against my desire that I should have any trouble with customers of the railway ; but it is necessary that the rate book and regulations of this department should be taken as the guide and strictly adhered to, otherwise I would be having nothing but disputes from year's end to year's end. I notice you state that you will have a number of locomotives travelling to and from Yarloop for repairs. I shall be very pleased indeed to convey them, but it can only be done upon the basis with which you are fully acquainted.

The Premier referred just now to trouble experienced by the Commissioner in collecting debts ; but here is a letter in which the Commissioner has reduced the total to £14. Was that a warrant or not for our objecting to pay £25 ? These are only a few of the letters that we have received and sent on similar subjects. Reference has been made to the expenses of the Commissioner, but I suppose there is no expense on the part of the company ! In reply to this letter we wrote :—

We have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 21st inst., on the subject of locomotive examination fees. We regret to learn that you cannot see your way clear to wait for payment of fees until after the services to be paid for have been rendered, and there has been afforded an opportunity of

ascertaining the exact amount due to your department, in place of charging an approximate fee, which may be either under or over the true amount, before the work is done. We regret also that you find trouble in collecting departmental charges from a number of firms of repute ; but we feel sure you will not include us among the number, since an examination of the papers relative to transactions between your department and ourselves will show that correctly rendered accounts have invariably been paid by us promptly and without demur, and that exception has been taken to incorrect and improper charges alone.

I say that when an account is rendered according to the rate book which is prepared for our guidance, we pay the amount without the slightest demur ; but when they charge 1s., 5s., £5, or £500 more than they are entitled to charge, whatever the excess is we do not pay it ; and I object to the Premier or anyone else inferring that an incorrect account should be paid. The letter goes on—

You state that you have no desire to charge us unfairly. This we do not doubt ; but we must ask, how are we to bring under your notice charges considered by us to be unjust if we do not dispute them ? Briefly, our contention is that an account for the transport or conveyance of a locomotive or any other vehicle should be rendered in the same way as an ordinary account, that is to say, in such a form as will allow of the checking of items. You observe that "the conditions as to the conveyance of locomotives are practically the same all over the world on Government lines." To this statement we are prepared to subscribe subject to the qualification, for the purposes of the matters here under review, that the conditions obtaining on Government lines elsewhere agree in differing radically from those now set up on the West Australian Government railways. The writer is in a position to vouch for the fact that locomotives have been conveyed over the Government lines of South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania without any prepayment of fees being demanded. So far as the Victorian railways are concerned, the writer is not aware that any special regulations exist for the conveyance of locomotives save in so far as they form portion of "contractors' plant" ; and the application of these provisions to our engines you refuse to allow. New South Wales makes no provision for running locomotives under steam, but hauls them at owner's risk in return for a charge of 2s. 6d. per mile. South Australia makes no provision of any kind whatever for haulage or transport of locomotives ; and the New Zealand rate-book shows only a charge of 1s. 6d. per mile for haulage. In these cases, be it noted, no charge for either inspection or pilotage is provided. In the case of Victoria, pilotage

fees are paid by the consignor of a locomotive, but never inspection fees.

Mr. George in dealing with the question states that he was only doing what was the custom on all other Government lines in the States of Australasia. In that statement he is absolutely incorrect, and it merely shows his ignorance. The letter goes on to say :—

You remark that the charge of £25, of which prepayment was demanded in respect of the locomotive forwarded from Torbay Junction to Worsley, was fixed at that amount in order that the department might have sufficient in hand to meet any possible expenditure, and you state farther that the charge has now been reduced to £14. We are still utterly at a loss to know how this reduced amount, £14, is arrived at, since all you could possibly charge under the old regulations is the examination fee provided for in the Rate Book, and this fee should at the outside amount to £1. Of course if your department has supplied the locomotive with coal and water, in addition to examining it, we are greatly obliged for these services, and shall be glad to pay whatever is due in respect of them. All we ask is for a detailed account, so that the matter may be settled. We are as desirous as yourself of avoiding trouble and friction, and therefore are perfectly ready to pay promptly any account rendered by your department in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down in the Rate Book; but when these are contravened or ignored by an account, we feel bound to take exception. As to the moving of our locomotives from station to station, we have to call your attention to the fact that an engine consigned from Yarloop to Midland Junction was detained for seven days because we refused to pay an amount of £4, which your department required before lifting the engine; that the amount was paid, but that a farther two days elapsed before the locomotive was lifted, owing to the refusal of the Yarloop station-master to allow her to proceed unless freight was prepaid; and that for nine days' time thus lost we claim the sum of forty-five pounds sterling (£45), of which claim due notice has been given to your department by our Yarloop office.

There was a charge of £45 made for detaining a locomotive for nine days. After that money had been paid, the locomotive was detained another two days, as the account had not been prepaid.

THE PREMIER: Did you have more to pay to the Government than the Government had to pay to you?

MR. T. SMITH: We are only asking for what we are entitled to. On the 28th April the following letter was received from the Commissioner :—

I enclose copy of account showing how the £14 is made up, and I desire to have the

matter concluded without farther delay. The conditions on which locomotives are conveyed over the Government railways are very clear, and why there should be any dispute I fail to see. However, when you have gone through the account, if you wish you can see me, and thresh it out. So far, I cannot see that the department has done other than it should. With regard to your concluding paragraph, I was not aware that you had sent in any claim, nor am I prepared to recognise same. The station-master acted on the instructions which apply to all customers of the railways; and seeing that you apparently claim the right to interpret the tariff, the department cannot be blamed for requiring the freight for extraordinary traffic to be prepaid. The fact of your having a ledger account does not affect the question, nor is your company's credit in any way in dispute. What I affirm is that I cannot permit the customers of the railways to be the sole judges of what shall be charged, nor is such a position permitted anywhere by any railway system. If you are agreeable to pay our charges, then the locomotives can go forward without prepayment; but if you intend to continue to dispute same, I must insist on the money being paid previous to despatch.

You will see that he is withdrawing a little in that letter. As a matter of fact, the acting Minister for Railways had been pressing him a little to reconsider his position.

THE PREMIER: Cannot you stop reading these letters?

MR. T. SMITH: I do not know that I should. They have taken us a lot of thought, and time, and worry to get them.

THE PREMIER: They are very costly to the State, firstly to the Commissioner and then to Parliament.

MR. T. SMITH: If in order, I will read them to the bitter end, and the next time I shall bring an extra copy down for the benefit of the Premier.

THE PREMIER: You should remember that *Hansard* costs 10s. 6d. a page to print.

MR. T. SMITH: Some of these have cost me £150 a page. The letter goes on to say :—

I would draw your attention to the conditions on which ledger accounts are granted, viz., that within seven days of delivery of statement the sum due shall be paid, and any alleged overcharge or claims must be the subject of inquiry and adjustment in following accounts. Your accountant will be able to inform you if this has been the custom with your company.

I got another letter from him on 4th May, 1903, as follows :—

Re Transfer of Engines "Noyes" and "Morgan," Yarloop to Midland Junction, and Midland Junction to Yarloop, respectively.—I regret to say that this matter has been brought under my notice, and I think you will admit that some sort of understanding should be arrived at, in order that there should be no waste of time and trouble in settling up matters which should be as easy as selling a load of timber. I find that when application was made for the transfer of these engines, the matter was taken up with Mr. Short, the Chief Manager, on the 14th April; he confirmed his telephonic message to you, stating that the charges for the examination of engines would be £4, and immediately the amount was paid the examination would be proceeded with. He also stated "There will be other charges in connection with the transit of the engines, of which you will be notified later." Now, your Mr. Driver, of Yarloop, on the 18th April paid the sum of £4, stating that he did so under protest, and at the same time handed in a claim for £35 for demurrage on the locomotive "Noyes," from the 10th April until the 17th.

This was done because at first the department refused to accept a consignment note for these locomotives; until we threatened to post them to him he would not take it :—

With regard to the payment of the £4 under protest, I think it is about time that sort of thing ended. The charges and conditions in connection with the transfer of locomotives are very clearly laid down in the Rate Book of these railways, and if you will refer to the *Government Gazette* of the 8th April—

That is the one he brought in himself—

—you will find the conditions under which locomotives will be taken are distinctly stated there; therefore, there can be no protest as to the prepayment which is required to be made. With regard to the freight charges, if the consignee has a ledger account, they may be debited accordingly, but the items for wages, etc., must be paid prior to the despatch of the engine. This also disposes of your claim; but if that were not sufficient, the fact that the consignment note is dated 16th April would certainly bar a claim from the 10th to the 17th April. Now the sum of £4 was an estimated amount to be followed by farther charges. I beg to herewith enclose, therefore, the charges in connection with these engines, viz., £7 17s. 6d., of which £4 has been paid, leaving a balance of £3 17s. 6d. due. The account of freight, as per rate-book, has, I understand, been debited to your ledger account, and will no doubt be paid in due course. Will you be good enough to let me have a cheque for this balance, as I am desirous of having the matter closed up, and if you have any farther engines to transfer

it would be just as well if we understood exactly the position you propose to take up. It is very annoying to me and must be equally so to yourselves, as we seem to be drifting into a feeling of antagonism. There need be nothing of this sort—the regulations are perfectly clear, and they must be adhered to. I hope that this will be the last time it will be necessary for matters of this sort to be brought under my notice, or that I should have to bring them under the notice of your General Manager.—Wm. J. GEORGE, Commissioner of Railways.

P.S. 6-5-03.—Your Mr. Brady called, and the matter was discussed. The herewith letter will enable him to go more fully into the matter at an appointment which can be made for Friday afternoon by ringing up Mr. Gallagher.—Wm. J. G.

On the 5th May the Commissioner wrote me as follows :—

Re Transfer of Locomotives.—Gentlemen,—From your Mr. Brady's call to-day I understand that you are likely to have to send a number of locomotives from one timber station to another. It is, therefore, better for all concerned that the charges be well understood by you, so that there may be no possibility of error and misunderstanding, or, to put it in Mr. Brady's language, that "any ordinary clerk can check the account and get it paid without any trouble." If in steam, all water, coal, firewood, and other stores supplied by the department will be charged for the actual quantity supplied, and the price of same will be fixed by the department at a slight advance over the cost. It will be readily understood by you that where coal is supplied at a distance from the source of supply in this State, the price charged for it will be in proportion to the original cost, plus freight and handling, etc. Water will be charged according to the cost to us, and here I might remark that the charge for water on the engine from Torbay is quite correct, as we were running water from Northam down the Great Southern line at a considerable cost to the working expenses. Pilot's wages, from the time of leaving his home station to the time he returns thereto, together with his personal expenses and railway fares, will be charged. If a driver and fireman are to be provided, the same conditions as for the pilot will apply.—*Examination of Engine* : If the examination is considered by the Chief Mechanical Engineer to be such as can be reliably done by the driver sent down, there will be no charge beyond his wages for the time taken. If, however, on examination of the driver he should consider the condition of the engine to be such as to render it, in his opinion, unsafe to travel regulation speed, and he requires an inspector to be sent down to arrange, then the time and the expenses of the inspector will have to be paid by the person to whom the engine belongs. If during transit a breakdown occurs, and repairs are consequently needed, the cost of same will have to be paid

by the owner, and the time and expenses of the Government men supplied to travel the engine will have to be paid during detention. Cost of all telegrams necessary to be sent will be charged to sender. Freight will be charged as provided for in the regulations. I think these conditions are reasonable, and should make it impossible for any farther misunderstanding; and if Mr. Brady will see me on Friday, I shall be very pleased to discuss same, and if it can be shown that the conditions are unfair, I am quite willing to do a just thing to all concerned.

I do not know why Mr. George took the trouble to write that rignmarole, because all was laid down in the rate book and was perfectly clear, and we never take exception to what is in the rate book; we pay what is in the rate book, and nothing more. On 11th May, 1903, I wrote as follows to the Chief Traffic Manager:—

In reply to your 6918/1903 of 23rd ultimo, addressed to our Yarloop office, and having reference to our claim for demurrage on the locomotive "Noyes," we note that you contend the Commissioner is not liable. Our contention is to the contrary. We beg to give you notice of our intention to claim for two days' additional demurrage, or nine days in all, instead of seven as advised your Yarloop station-master.

On the 19th May I received this letter:—

With reference to the matter of charges for the transfer of locomotives over Government railway lines, I now send statements giving details of the charges. It must, however, be clearly understood that I shall not be prepared to go so fully into such matters on each occasion, and that I merely give the details in this case so that you will have an idea of the charges which we debit from time to time, and that a fair principle is being carried out. Of course, as I have explained previously, where the amount deposited is in excess of actual charge, the unexpended balance would be refunded. I await the cheques for £3 17s. 6d. and £14.—Yours faithfully, Wm. J. GEORGE, Commissioner of Railways.

In this he says that although we owe him the money he has an account against us, but he will not let us have details. I have here the detailed accounts for the £14 and for the £3 17s. 6d. We wrote to the Commissioner in reply to his demand for these cheques, and we said—

In reply to your G.M. 1660/03, C., of 4th inst., we enclose our cheque for £5 7s. 10d. in payment of amounts due for inspection and telegrams, and coal, water and stores supplied in connection with the transfer of locomotive from Torbay Junction to Worsley. As under the rate book we are not liable for pilotage, we have deducted the charge under the head from your account; we trust our action will meet

with your approval. As regards your claim for £3 17s. 6d. in respect of an engine conveyed from Yarloop to Midland Junction, we have a counter claim of £45 for nine days' detention of the locomotive, leaving you indebted to us, so far as regards this particular transaction, in the sum of £41 2s. 6d.—MILLARS' KARRI & JARRAH Co. (1902), Ltd.

On the 10th June this letter passed:—

To close finally matters relative to the transfer of locomotives from Torbay Junction to Worsley, from Yarloop to Midland Junction, and from Midland Junction to Yarloop, we now forward, as agreed, our cheque for £5 sterling. Kindly acknowledge receipt.—MILLARS' KARRI & JARRAH Co. (1902), LTD.

After all that correspondence and after all that trouble and worry and annoyance, it comes to this, that for the £25 and for the £7 the account is settled for something like £13 or £14. It is a scandal to this State, and it would be a scandal to any State, that people should be put to the worry, the trouble, and the annoyance to fight over an account which one is never entitled to pay. In 1902 an arrangement was made with the Commissioner of Railways that all timber in stock at the mills at that time should be carried by the Railway Department at the old rates. After Mr. George's appointment, he called on the Timber Merchants' Association, or sent them a note, stating that he thought of cancelling this order. The merchants called and saw Mr. George, and explained to him that the Minister for Railways had given them permission to send the timber at the old rates. Mr. George said he would look into the matter. On September 3rd the Commissioner wrote to say that by the end of the month he would cancel the arrangement—that it would cease. That was arbitrary and it was altogether outside of Mr. George's province to do such a thing: the Commissioner should not be allowed to practically annul a promise given by a former Minister for Railways. If the Minister had said "You must remove the timber in five months, or three months, or even two months," the Timber Merchants' Association would have had to get the timber away, but there was no stipulated time. The timber had accumulated through the scarcity of trucks, and the Minister seeing the reasonableness of the contention and the request, allowed the timber to go at the old rate. It does not matter to the

timber merchants where the timber went. The Railway Department sent two or three officers to the mills to check the timber stated by the merchants to be awaiting trucks. The quantity, as found by the officers, was entered and consigned, and because the timber is not sent away from the stations by the 30th September, the Commissioner steps in and says "You will have to pay the higher rate." It is unfair and outside his jurisdiction; and the House, in my opinion, should not allow such a thing to be done. Here is another instance of the Commissioner's unreasonableness. In 1895 or 1896 the then Minister for Railways and the General Manager of Railways said that the timber merchants must find their own trucks. At the present time the timber companies have about 700 trucks in use and another one hundred under construction. After the merchants got their trucks, arrangements were made with the General Manager that a time limit should be allowed on a truck. Say a truck left Yarloop to-day to come to Fremantle, there would be a time limit allowed of three days. If the truck was brought back in three days there would be no charge against the Government, but if the truck came back in five or six days, the extra days would be booked against the Government as demurrage. On the other hand, if the timber merchants took a truck from the Government and were supposed to return it in a day, and the truck was kept for a week, the merchants would be charged demurrage by the Government. This arrangement had been in force since about 1896 until the other day, when the merchants got this letter from the Commissioner:—

With reference to the accounts submitted by you against this department for alleged demurrage on your wagons, I find on inquiry that as a rule your wagons have been given reasonable despatch, and any delay that has occurred has been at terminal points for the convenience of your company. I am not prepared, under the circumstances, to make any allowance in this connection, and your account is, therefore, respectfully declined.—WM. J. GEORGE, Commissioner of Railways.

That is how he treats all suggestions coming from our side; and on the other side he demands payment right away, whether that be right or wrong. As to the trucks being retained by us at the terminal point for our own convenience,

the statement is absolutely incorrect and without foundation. Even when we detain a truck at this end, away from the end from which it was consigned, we have to pay the same rate as if the truck belonged to the Government. I am sorry that I have had to detain the House so long in reference to these matters; but if the company I represent are worried and tyrannised over by the Commissioner of Railways to such an extent as I have indicated, I am sorry for smaller traders in this State. His actions are to me next to unbearable; and members can hardly imagine the distaste I have for doing business with him. For the last 15 or 20 years I have been dealing personally with Commissioners of Railways, Engineers-in-Chief, and Ministers of Railways, and have never hitherto had any such disagreements or ill-feeling; and I say this is not the feeling that should be engendered between a branch of the State service, such as the Railway Department, and its customers. I feel that it is incumbent on the Government to make searching inquiry as to whether these statements made by me are facts; and if they are facts the Government should take such steps as will prevent future complaints. I may of course be biased, or Mr. George may be able to put on my statements a totally different complexion; but I have read the correspondence as it took place, and have shown a waste of time, labour, and intelligence on his part over trivial matters which could and should have been settled at a five minutes' conference if he had been reasonable and had taken an every-day point of view. I congratulate this country on the appointment of the Minister for Lands (Hon. J. M. Hopkins). A more energetic and enthusiastic man it would be hard to imagine. He has been all over the country since his appointment, and if travelling from place to place will make him acquainted with it he should be well fitted for his new duties. I am sure the Minister will deserve well of this State.

HON. G. THROSSELL (Northam): Though I did not intend to speak this evening, I cannot sit here in silence. I desire in as few words as possible to offer my congratulations to the Government on the policy they have laid before the country. Although that policy may not be perfect, I think it is one which we

may all fairly accept. I desire also to congratulate them on the good work they have done in the last few months. Their task was not easy. It is not easy for an untrained and inexperienced youth to take up the reins of power so long under the control of the old *régime*. Since Sir John Forrest's Ministry went out of office mistakes have been made, and I for one do not look forward to the date when we shall find a Government that does not make mistakes. With regard to Ministerial trips around the country, upon which comment has been made, I think Ministers, recognising their inexperience, have done the right thing in making these special excursions. In no other way could they have acquainted themselves with the requirements of the people and the country's possibilities. One of the strong points of the old Forrest Government was that, being old residents like the early Premier, Sir John Forrest, to whom almost every square mile of the country was known, no agitation was required in order that he might decide whether this or that public work was needed. He knew the country by heart; and that knowledge often stood him in good stead when others could not see eye to eye with him. Regarding the great question of the Transcontinental Railway, I desire to say that while I am heartily in accord with that great work, it is just possible that we attach to it too much importance. I certainly should be sorry for the present or any other Government to guarantee the South Australian Government against any loss that may arise from its construction. We should remember that it is a national work, to be constructed entirely by the Federal Government; and as such the cost should be borne by the Commonwealth. I doubt not that when there is time for calm reflection, the South Australian Government will recognise that they, above all, have far more to gain by this line than has any other State; more to gain for trade purposes certainly than any other. Bearing in mind the promises made by Mr. Charles Kingston and others before federation, I feel that the South Australian Government will ultimately follow our example and pass an enabling Bill. We all know that before we entered the federation there was an oral contract that such a

Bill should be passed; and had it not been for the pledge, implied at any rate, that this great work should be carried out, many people would have hesitated before casting in our lot with the Commonwealth. I rejoice to see the completion of the great Goldfields Water Scheme, and cannot forbear saying in passing that great credit is due to the Minister for Works (Hon. C. H. Rason) for the energy and intelligence he displayed in securing this end. Very much more remains to be done. I have said before, and I repeat, that nature seems to have been against us in the construction of this mighty undertaking. Last year the goldfields had a 30-inch rainfall, while the agricultural centres, which usually have 18 to 22 inches, had 9 inches only. Therefore the water scheme was actually required more urgently for the agricultural centres than for the goldfields proper. I share with others a feeling of regret that any such utterances should have been made public as appeared in one of the goldfields papers, which reported a public meeting as passing an amendment seeking to avoid the proper payment of water rates. I doubt not that this amendment emanated from only a few of the ratepayers. However, I would impress on the Minister for Works and the Government generally that when this water scheme was devised it was intended that water should be provided as cheaply as possible. The Minister, in his desire to make the scheme pay, has not been backward in levying a heavy rate on the districts which are close to the source of supply. Many people are largely indebted to the Minister and the Government for having given them water at 5s. and 6s. per thousand gallons; but I suppose there will be a rate in addition to that charge. As I told the Minister, the original estimated charge of 3s. 6d. a thousand gallons was entirely based on the calculation that five millions per day would be consumed. Unfortunately, that has not proved correct; and as far as appearances go there is little chance of that consumption being reached on the fields. From whatever cause the result may arise it must be plain to us that a great climatic change has taken place since the goldfields were settled. I well remember being in Coolgardie when for a short time water was 3s. 6d. per single gallon. It was carried from Coolgardie

to Kalgoorlie to supply the hotels and the general public. We all remember that a bath was then considered a luxury. I remember, too, that while I could get soda-water I could not get water and lime-juice. That state of things has passed away. Goldfields residents now tell us that hotels and private houses both have an ample water supply almost entirely independent of the goldfields water scheme. What has brought about that change? It is hard for me to say. I thought so strongly on the point that some time ago I consulted the *Australasian* upon it to ascertain whether it was not possible that the advent of population had set in motion some forces of nature more successful in rain-making than those said to be enlisted by Dr. McCarthy. Whatever has caused the climatic change, the fact remains that it has taken place. I have even noticed instances of the cultivation of small patches of hay and other crops, and in one instance fruit has been successfully cultivated on the fields. The man who a few years ago had foretold this would have been regarded as mad. I am altogether in accord with the action of the Minister in refusing to encourage agricultural settlement on the goldfields. To do that would be to invite failure and ruin to the settlers. In regard to the general policy of water conservation throughout the State, I have nothing but praise to utter. This must be our policy not only in Western Australia but throughout Australia as a whole, for the great problem is water and how it shall be conserved; and I am rejoiced to know that the Government are taking steps not only to find water themselves and to reserve suitable areas for its conservation, but to give direct encouragement to settlers who have privately embarked in similar enterprises. We have done much in that direction; but as an old settler, I confess we have not done nearly enough; for every gully should be dammed, and every valley should have an abundant supply of water. As to new railways, I am glad to find that the Government are alive to the fact that we must have no stand-still railway policy; that with a huge territory at our disposal we must not hesitate to borrow if by borrowing we can attract people and can settle them on our enormous areas. After

all, if we have 500,000 acres of land now inaccessible and can tap it by a railway, certainly the money borrowed for that railway will come back to the State. We need not fear to borrow money; the only doubt is as to whether we shall spend it wisely or unwisely. As in private affairs, a man may be heavily indebted and yet be building up a fortune, though he appear imprudent to those around him. I venture to say we have not nearly done with railway construction. I should be sorry to think that we in this huge country have come to the end of our railway policy. I hope that sooner or later the country from Bunbury to Albany, or from Bridgetown to Albany, will be opened up by a railway. Some years ago a report was made upon the suggestion and it was clearly demonstrated that there were not only rich stretches of karri country there, but also of agricultural lands. More people are coming here, and it is very clear that not only must the Minister for Lands visit these places, but that he should also be active in opening them up and placing them at the disposal of new settlers. Reference has been made to the introduction of population, and it has been said we should use special efforts to induce people to come here. I think the population is increasing fairly well. The whole trouble in connection with it is that we are getting the population at the expense of other States. We are winning hardly any people from the old country, where there is a teeming population, which could do very well with us. Why is this? Why do Canada and America win the population from England, and Australia fail to do so? The reason is not far to seek. Canada, for instance, has a stretch of a thousand miles of prairie land of the very best kind. Is it a wonder, therefore, that the thousands of people in the old country go out to Canada, are taken in hand by the Lands Department, and straightway settled on the soil? There is no doubt that Australia does not lend itself readily to the influx of population. What we require is an increase in population consisting of small capitalists, and if steps can be taken to attract such a class of people, it is the duty of the Government to take them. If we are merely attracting a labouring or pauper population, then I say most

emphatically that this country is not a place for the introduction of a large number of people who will be in need as soon as they land here. We have boundless areas of land suitable for settlement, and no one knows this better than myself. I think this settlement is going on fairly well, and that we have need to congratulate ourselves on the progress we have made. Reference has been made to the contemplated amendment of the land laws, and there is some talk of liberalising them. I have no objection to the liberalising of the land laws. I said before, and repeat now, that next to Canada, in fact in front of Canada, Western Australia has the most liberal land laws in the world. We charge 10s. an acre for it, we charge no interest on that, and we allow 20 years to pay for the land. That is merely 5 per cent. on the cost price. In addition to that, we give 160 acres of land free; so that practically we are giving the land away. Then I come to the question of the best way of dealing with working men. There is one part of the Land Act which might with advantage take a more prominent place in regard to settlement on the land; by that I mean dealing with the working man. We hear the man in the street cry out, "Put men on the land; let the Government acquire land, supply the men with implements, and support them on the land free for twelve months." Was there ever a more foolish cry? We do not want paupers on the land. There is a great cry from the unemployed that work should be found for them. We claim to be a democratic people, and the Labour members profess to support all that the working men do. In amending the land laws, it was entirely my own doing that I looked out for the working man; and now we have a system of free farms, with a right to select not less than ten acres nor more than 160 acres. What does that mean? The Minister for Lands will tell us that we are settling new men on these free farms at the rate of 100 a month. Now every one of those men will require a permanent labour supply. Working men often complain that there is no inducement for them to settle in country districts away from town conveniences. Why is that? With the exception of the miner, we do not make the men possibly as comfortable as we

might do, and consequently we do not seek to give them permanent homes. Now is the opportunity for the Minister for Lands, who is ambitious enough to make his mark in large capitals in the annals of the Lands Department of his adopted country, to give prominence to the fact that every man can not only have 160 acres free, but can also get land at 10s. an acre. I would suggest that special allotments should be laid off for working men, in 10-acre blocks. This would provide great inducement for working men to take up residence in country districts; and what would be the result? Numbers of these blocks would be taken up; each man would be cultivating his own little patch, and would have his pig and cow, his orchard and vines, his poultry and fuel. Instead of men hanging about hotels and verandah posts, you would never hear the murmur of discontent from such a body of men settled on their own little farms. Friendships would be formed among them, and in a few years we should be actually breeding, so to speak, a class which we might justly call a "bold peasantry." I commend this thought to the Minister for Lands. With regard to another alteration in the land laws, I do not know what direction it will take; but I do desire to hold up a warning finger against the creation of large estates. We have a vote of £200,000 pounds, provided some years ago, for expenditure annually in the purchase of large estates, and we are doing splendidly with that vote. In every instance where land has been purchased for the purposes of close settlement it has proved a grand success. But what do we see in the Eastern Districts? We talk liberally of large estates; but the estates we have purchased and cut up were not large. By comparison with estates in the other States, we have no large estates in this country, except, perhaps, the Stirling and the Peel estates. Whenever large estates are subdivided for settlement, 500 acres possibly should be the maximum quantity which any one person might take up, and very much less, down to 100 acres. Let us get as many people as possible on these small areas. What now are we doing? I will take my share of blame in the matter, if desired. I noticed the other day, at the corner of the Terrace,

a proclamation issued on the authority of the Minister, setting forth in red letters how one man could acquire a large estate. He might have 1,000 acres as a residence area, 1,000 acres as a non-residence area, and he could also take up 160 acres as a free farm. In addition, he would be able to take up still another 1,000 acres by direct payment. Thus one man could hold 3,160 acres, and we are showing him how to do it. The father of a family, with a couple of boys, could at once start with an estate of no less than 9,000 acres. We may be told that all our protection is the compulsory improvements. The compulsory improvements formed a protection so long as the man had to put his hand in his pocket in order to make them; but side by side with the granting of power to take up these large areas, we provide that the Government shall supply the money with which to make the improvements; and such a family as I have described could at once demand no less a sum than £2,400 from the State for the purpose of making improvements under the land laws. On this matter I speak advisedly, for I know that the speculator is abroad, and this individual can exist only in a district where large areas exist. Members may know that the country to which I refer is the Great Southern, and I shall be surprised if you do not find estate holders there who have 20 years' credit, holding 6,000 or 7,000 acre blocks.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That has not been done in my time.

MR. THROSSELL: In the Avon Valley there is not, except in one instance, an estate of over 8,000 acres. It is a very serious state of things, and one result of large estates is that already we have to drive men who want to take up land 20 miles from a railway. I fear that it will be possible presently that we shall wake up in a fool's paradise, to find large blocks all along the railway line, and then we shall be compelled to do again what we have been doing recently, that is to go in the market and repurchase this land. I should be sorry to live in a country where there were no large estates or no progressive landowners like my friend the member for York (Mr. Burges); but men who want large estates should create them out of their

own resources, and not use the Government machinery for doing it.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: They don't now.

MR. THROSSELL: They do.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: How do they do it?

MR. THROSSELL: We do not want to introduce people to this country to make large owners of them, for we know that a great country depends for its greatness on the population it can absorb and settle. If that be so, although the large owner of 8,000 acres may work it for himself, it is much better for a country to have eight families on one large block of land than to have it owned by one individual. I would limit the acreage to be held to 1,000 acres; and if a man has the ambition to obtain a large extent of country let him pay cash for it. He would then be dependent upon his own resources. I would not act so paradoxically as to buy back large estates with the one hand and build up large estates with the other hand. As to a rumour that it is the intention of the Minister to wipe out grazing leases, I would ask him very seriously to pause before he does so. For every 10,000 acres of first-class land we have 100,000 acres of scrub or sandplain. Departmental officers have already told us in the public print that as they go through the country now it is not uncommon to see a large extent of sandplain surrounded by good solid fences; and this is one of the benefits derived from the grazing leases. I know that the late Minister for Lands took a very active interest in this great question, and he wisely said we should encourage the taking up of grazing leases, and even go farther and help the lessees to stock them. To wipe out these grazing leases would be a huge mistake. We might strike out altogether second-class land, and have the 10s. land and the 3s. 9d. land confined to treeless country. We would be perfectly safe in doing that as we have in this country no rich prairie lands. I commend these thoughts, in passing, to our intelligent and active Minister for Lands, in hope that he will bear them in mind at the proper time. As to the Midland Railway, I regret there is no mention of it in the Governor's Speech. How to deal with the Midland lands is a problem that I do not care to

dwell upon now, because it is a question for Ministers to deal with, and I am sure the Government will give their best attention to it. It occurs to me that something might be done in the direction of a land tax on absentee owners. If that were done, though, I am not clear that it would be either right or politic to bring the Midland Railway lands under such a law. As to speculators who became creditors of the Midland Company and have taken out their debts in 10, 20, 30, and 40 thousand acres of land, and not the worst land you may be sure, whose land is now lying dormant, if an absentee land tax were brought in on unimproved lands, if it would not touch the Midland Railway Company it might touch these individuals. They have done nothing, and deserve no consideration at our hands. This is no new doctrine that I preach. I have long advocated a tax on absentees. Men holding freehold land should be bound by the same laws as the men holding Government land. That, to my mind, is the best possible tax that could be imposed. Years ago I induced Sir John Forrest to go so far as to bring down a Bill to insist upon all private estates being subject to the same law as Government lands pure and simple. I do not think Sir John Forrest had the courage to go forward with it, and the Bill lapsed. Still I am of the same mind, and it is our duty, now we have an influx of population, to deal with the lands of absentees. All the old settlers in the Avon Valley who are doing their best and struggling under great disadvantages, would not be taxed. One of the planks in the policy of this Government should be to start new industries. We all deplore the fact that so much money is sent out of the country for the purchase of soil products. Equally do we deplore the sending away of so much money for manufactured goods. A great deal of the highest class of machinery is used in this country, and an immense sum of money is sent away annually for this class of machinery. It has always occurred to me that it would be a wise and statesmanlike act if some effort were made to stimulate private enterprise in the direction of providing ourselves with the necessary means of developing our resources. I can only say, in conclusion, that I am very pleased with the action

of the Government and their policy. It seems to my mind the policy for the country at the present time is wise administration, the development of our resources, and less legislation. I have pleasure in making these remarks, and in a general way, giving my support to the policy of the Government. I have said before, the Government have made mistakes, and no doubt one or two of those mistakes will come up for discussion before the Session closes. I prefer that the younger members of the House should take up the position of critics. With regard to the Occidental leases, a mistake was made, and in proper time I hope the Government will be able to give an account of themselves in respect to that matter. As to the land policy of the Government, I believe in small estates and the greatest number of people being settled on the land. Again I say in a general way, I have great pleasure in supporting the policy of the Government.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): I wish to say a few words to-night on the Address. There is very little in the Speech that requires much criticism; there are but few contentious matters in it. I should have been pleased if a great deal more had appeared in the Speech. The Collie Railway is mentioned, and as I understand that line will run through good country, I think it is a wise undertaking, and will lead to more close settlement in that part of the country. By that line coal can be conveyed to the fields, which will be required there, I suppose, shortly after the line is completed. I do not see my way to support the Jandakot Railway. It is too near the town, and is not likely to be a paying concern.

MR. DAGLISH: Have you ever been out there?

MR. BURGESS: He would not have seen much if he had been.

MR. STONE: I did go over part of the land before the member for Subiaco came to the country. The Port Hedland Railway is likely to come up for consideration this Session, and if a reasonable offer is made by private enterprise to construct the railway on fair lines, and the Government are not prepared to build it, I shall support the proposal, as there is rich mining country in the vicinity which cannot be worked without a line of railway

to convey fuel and timber to the mines. I regret no mention is made in the Speech of the Magnet-Lawlers Railway. That is a line that would pay the country and help to develop the resources in that part of the State. The expenditure of £120,000 on the Bunbury Harbour will, to a great extent, be a waste, at any rate as far as the general public are concerned. The expenditure of this money will be of advantage to the Timber Combine, whose object is to raise the price of timber in this State. Scores of thousands of pounds have already been spent at Bunbury, and I do not think more improvements are needed there. I am pleased that the Minister for Mines is to bring in a Bill for mining on private property. This is a long-felt want and will do a great deal of good to the State. Land sold prior to 1898 carries all mineral rights except gold. There are coal and other minerals in this fee simple land which are locked up. By a Mining on Private Property Bill this land could be operated on. I regret that the Government have made no mention of an old-age pension scheme. I think some provision should be made to start an old-age pension scheme in this State. Such a scheme has worked satisfactorily in other places, and I think it should be introduced here, in the shape of a system of State insurance. I would also like to see the immigration regulations liberalised, to allow people to come into the country with less difficulty than is the case now. The Government have subsidised a steamer to trade between Fremantle and Geraldton, which I think is likely to be a great success. It has brought down the price of freight and passages, so that people can get about and do business cheaper and quicker than when they had to depend on the Midland Railway. I do not wish to find any fault with the Midland Company. I wish them every success they deserve. I would also like to see the Government take in hand the question of mining companies and other companies paying their servants fortnightly, the same as employees on public works are paid. Mining and other companies only pay once a month, which creates trouble with tradespeople and causes men to be dishonest. I would like to see some legislation adopted in regard to auctioneers. A

man can start business as an auctioneer without capital, and be trusted to sell goods and property belonging to other people. Often there is great difficulty in obtaining the proceeds of the sale. A person may think the auctioneer has property, but on inquiry he discovers it belongs to his wife. I think auctioneers' licenses should be cancelled if the auctioneer fails to make good the proceeds of sales to his clients, in the same way that a lawyer is struck off the rolls if he does not pay up money belonging to his clients. I would like to see a Usury Bill brought in to prevent people charging unreasonable rates of interest. A case came under my notice to-day in which a man had borrowed a few hundreds of pounds for a week or a month, but it happened to run on for 18 months. He was to pay 5 per cent. monthly, equal to 60 per cent. per year, and it mounted to a big sum before he got his arrangements completed. The Government should try to stop people taking unfair advantage of persons in difficulties. Much has recently been said about the Mount Erin Estate, in the Victoria District, and its proposed purchase. The Government instructed the Lands Purchase Board to report on the area, and the report was unfavourable, not recommending the purchase. The people who are best acquainted with that country are of opinion that the bargain would have been a fair deal, and profitable to the Government. I believe that the estate consists of about 10,000 acres of land in fee simple, 10,000 acres of conditional purchase, and 43,000 acres of pastoral country, on which there are extensive improvements such as clearing, fencing, and buildings, the value of which could be charged to purchasers. To show the demand for land in that district, last year at the Geraldton Lands Office the conditional purchases amounted to 116,526 acres, and pastoral leases were taken up to the extent of 1,200,000 acres, showing that there is a brisk demand for land in that part of the country. As a fact, the farmers' sons and people from mining districts who are desirous of settling on the land are driven away to other parts to look for farms; so I think the Government might have bought this estate if they had been honestly and properly

advised. I hope the business of this House will proceed a little more quickly this session than has been the case during the last two years. I should like to see a time limit imposed on some speakers, one of whom is the member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor); for many members talk with a view to wasting time and not for the advancement of business.

On motion by MR. DAGLISH, debate adjourned until the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.35 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 28th July, 1903.

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THE ACTING PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Return showing Offices Rented in Perth by various Government departments, ordered on motion of Hon. A. G. Jenkins.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read, assenting to Supply Bill, £1,000,000.

FEDERAL SENATE VACANCY.

Message from the Governor received and read, approving of Joint Standing Rules and Orders relating to election of Senator in joint sittings.

THE ACTING PRESIDENT informed the House that, in conformity with the Joint Standing Rules and Orders, the President and the Speaker had fixed the next Wednesday, at a quarter to five o'clock, in the Government House Ballroom, for a joint sitting of the Council and the Assembly to choose a person to hold the office of a Senator whose place had become vacant in the Federal Parliament.

MOTION—RATING OF LAND, NEW SELECTORS.

HON. C. A. PIESSE (South-East) moved:

That in justice to new settlers, and in the interests of land settlement generally, all conditional purchase land selections should be free from local taxation for a period of two years from the date of approval of the application.

Serious consequences must follow the rejection or even the acceptance of this motion. Its adoption would to some extent limit the responsibilities of settlers on the soil; but after hearing reasons members would surely agree that new settlers or others who took up land with the object of improving it were entitled to relief. The Roads Act of last year provided three systems of rating: first, the annual rental value; second, the capital improved value; third, the capital and unimproved value. In practice these systems worked badly. Most of the roads boards had already rated their districts, and were obliged by circumstances to adopt a system of rating objectionable to the boards and unfair to the ratepayers. In other districts a system of rating more in keeping with the wish of the people had been adopted, and yet this was most unfair to the new settler. Members would agree that taxation on unimproved values was the fairest way out of the difficulty. In an old settled district the roads board found it necessary to shut its eyes to the very presence of a new settler, thus acting illegally, because they had not the heart to rate the man from the moment he took up the land. This should not be. Another board had