

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 25th October, 1898.

Papers presented—Question: Port Hedland Beacons—Coolgardie Mining Exhibition Bill: Message from the Governor, Recommittal for Amendments—Municipal Institutions Amendment Bill (borrowing, etc.), second reading, in Committee, reported—Land Bill, Legislative Council's Amendments—Mining on Private Property Bill, Legislative Council's Amendment—Loan Estimates, in Committee, completed and reported—Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill, clerical error—Annual Estimates, Committee of Ways and Means, reported—Appropriation Bill, first reading—Marriage Act Amendment Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading—Adjournment, Prorogation arrangements.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Advertising in Newspapers, Return showing detailed expenditure, as ordered.

By the DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (through the Premier): Architectural Branch, Return showing payments to private architects.

QUESTION: PORT HEDLAND BEACONS.

MR. KINGSMILL asked the Premier: 1, Whether any steps had been taken towards the placing of beacons, where required, at the entrance to Port Hedland. 2, When he expected this work to be finished.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), replied: 1, The temporary beacons put up by Commander Dawson have been repaired, and are now in good order. £430 has been provided on the Loan Estimates for permanent beacons. 2, It will take about three months to complete them.

COOLGARDIE MINING EXHIBITION BILL.

MESSAGE: RECOMMITTAL.

In accordance with a message received from the Governor, the Bill was recommitted for certain amendments.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. HIGHAM said he desired to move an amendment in clause 1.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Bill had been recommitted for the amendments suggested in His Excellency's message, and no other amendment could be entertained at this stage.

Clause 2—Power to mortgage:

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that clause 2 be amended to read as follows:—

The council may from time to time raise any sum or sums of money, not exceeding in the aggregate five thousand pounds, to provide funds to be applied towards the cost of buildings and other improvements to be made on the said land, for the purposes aforesaid, and may secure the repayment thereof, with interest, by way of mortgage of the said land, and may guarantee any such loan. Provided that no mortgagee shall be bound or required to see to the application of such moneys or be affected by the misapplication or non-application thereof; and in case of the exercise by the mortgagee of the power of sale, the purchaser shall hold the said land freed from the purposes for which it shall have been granted as aforesaid. Provided also that no security given under the provisions of this Act shall involve the mayor or councillors in personal liability.

The object was to give a better security to those who were advancing money; although, for his own part, the Bill appeared to be sufficient as it was, seeing that the value of the land and building was so much in excess of the amount authorised to be borrowed. At the same time, those who wanted to borrow were not always the best judges of the security desired by those who wished to lend; therefore, with a view of facilitating the money being obtained on easy terms, and at the request of the municipal council of Coolgardie, he moved this motion. He did not think there could be any objection to the provisions as sent down in His Excellency's message.

MR. MORGANS: The changes proposed by the amending clause really did not affect the question, as far as the amount to be borrowed was concerned, and he hoped the Committee would pass it.

Question put and passed.

New Clause—The provisions of Part VIII. of the Municipal Institutions Act 1895 shall not apply to any money raised under this Act:

THE PREMIER moved that the clause be added to the Bill, to stand as clause 3. Put and passed.

As a consequential amendment, clause 3 was numbered clause 4.

Resolutions reported, report adopted, and a message transmitted to the Legislative Council requesting their concurrence in the amendments.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT
AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

BORROWING POWER AND PRIVATE STREETS.
SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: The object of the Bill is to empower new municipalities to borrow money. A great difficulty is experienced by new municipalities in providing the wherewithal to carry on their duties; for they come into existence with a flourish of trumpets, and find themselves without any funds at all. It takes some time to strike a rate, and a rate can, in ordinary course, be struck only at a certain period of the year; and as municipal councils do not always come into existence at that time, the result is that they have to apply to the Government for money. The Government have done their best to provide new municipalities with money so far as regards the payment of the subsidy; but a great difficulty is experienced by municipalities in every instance where they are go-ahead places. I know well the difficulty experienced by North Fremantle, where there was a large population; for when the municipality came into existence it had no money, nor was there any Crown land on which to locate municipal offices, there being no Government reserves; and the result was that the councillors and others had to pledge their personal credit, in order to finance the municipality for a considerable time. Recently the municipality of Claremont, also other municipalities such as Leederville and Subiaco, have come into existence under similar conditions; and as they find they want funds for carrying on, the only way they can obtain funds is to come to the Government, or give a personal guarantee to a bank. It seems to me that while the provision in the Municipal Institutions Act, that the power to borrow should be

limited to ten times the general rate received during the previous two years, is very good for the purposes of those municipalities that have been in existence for some time, yet it does not meet the case of new municipalities, because they have to wait two years before they can find out what the general rate has been for the required period. Although the intention of the Legislature might have been to prevent new municipalities from borrowing in the first two years, the statute does not say so, but says the borrowing power of a municipality shall be limited to ten times the ordinary annual rate for the past two years. That might have been very good in years gone by, when municipalities never thought of borrowing till perhaps they were 20 years old; but that does not do now, therefore we will not be acting unwisely in allowing a municipality, when it comes into existence, to borrow at any time during the first two years of its existence to the extent of the estimated ordinary annual income of the municipality for the first two years. For instance, say a municipality was erected which had a probable estimated income of £1,000 a year; then as soon as it found that its ordinary income would be likely to be £2,000 for the first two years, it would be authorised to borrow £2,000 under this Bill, subject to the other conditions of the Municipal Institutions Act. That is, it would have to go through a certain procedure and obtain the authority of the ratepayers. That would tide it over the first two years; and after the first two years the municipality would, with the authority of the ratepayers, be able, under the existing statute, to borrow ten times the ordinary annual income for the two preceding years. If the law says that a municipal council, having been erected for two years, can borrow ten times the ordinary annual income, I do not think we are asking too much when we ask that, during those two years, it shall be enabled to borrow to the extent of the estimated income of the two years. I can see no reason why we should not give this power. The power to borrow is always limited by the willingness to lend; and, before a municipality can borrow, it has to get someone to agree to lend the money; therefore we should be perfectly

safe in entrusting this power to new municipalities.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): I agree with what has been said by the Premier in regard to the difficulties which municipalities have to contend with; but while this Bill is before the House, I would like to draw attention to one or two material matters which will affect the elections and also the making-up of the rate-book. Section 73, sub-section (b), of the present Act refers to proxies; and suppose a person goes to one of the other colonies, say, for the races, then it happens that some of those acting as returning officers have taken the clause to mean that such person would be disfranchised. Of course we know perfectly well that those who are resident in other colonies would not be entitled to vote here. The question put is this: "Is the said person now, to the best of your knowledge and belief, resident within this colony, and more than twenty miles from this place?" I think that whilst we are dealing with this Bill it will be well, seeing that the elections are coming on, to settle this question and determine what is meant by "resident." Of course we can understand that a person who has perhaps taken his family away, and resides in another colony, is not a resident here; but the question is whether a person who might be merely going away from the colony on a visit is a resident. It is a matter on which I ask the Government to assist me, when in Committee. Another point is in relation to section 165, which says:—

The Council shall, as soon as practicable, and within sixty days after the making up of any rate-book, cause notice to be served upon every owner or occupier whose name is inserted in such book, in the form or to the effect of the form contained in the seventh schedule to this Act. Two or more properties may be included in one notice.

The municipality of South Fremantle has increased to such a large extent that we find it impossible to send out the notices within the 60 days; and, if the Government will assist me, I would like the period altered to 90 days. This will not affect the ratepayers in any way, whereas it will assist the council materially in making out their rating notices. The rate-book has to be made up not later than the 30th December, and as there are

several days, taking the Christmas holidays and Sundays into account, on which work could not be done, the time allowed is less than 60 days. That time is not sufficient.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): The hon. member's suggestions are undoubtedly worthy of much consideration, and such amendments ought to be made; but having regard to the close of the session being so near, and that this short Bill is one of emergency, as otherwise it would not have been introduced at this late period, I would ask the hon. member not to press his amendments now. The Government will, next session, introduce a Bill to amend the Municipal Institutions Act, when the amendments suggested by the hon. member, and many more, can be dealt with.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

New Clause—Public street, minimum width:

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the following be added as a new clause:—

Section 134 of the principal Act is hereby amended by adding the following words thereto:—"Provided, notwithstanding anything contained in section 120 of the Municipal Institutions Act of 1895, that the council, with the consent of the Governor, shall have power to dedicate to the public use any private street not less than thirty-three feet in width which shall have been in unrestricted public use with vehicular traffic for twelve months; and after publication of notice thereof in the 'Government Gazette,' such dedication shall be deemed to be valid and complete, and such street shall thereupon become a public thoroughfare, and shall be noticed and recorded in the Office of Titles; and the council shall have full power and authority over such street, and may expend money upon it in the same manner as on any other public street."

The Government were not particularly concerned in regard to this clause, but he knew it was an important matter in several municipalities. Private lands adjoining a municipality had been subdivided and perhaps sold in sections for building purposes, and in some instances an existing street in the municipality was continued in alignment through private land so disposed of; but as this continuation ran through land which had not been taken over by the municipality, and

which remained practically private land, there was a difficulty as to getting it macadamised. In North Fremantle, for instance, John street was macadamised 33ft. wide, and it ran eastward as far as the boundary of a freehold allotment granted in the early days of the colony. That freehold block had since been cut into sections, and the owner continued the alignment of John-street through his land as far as the estuary. The council could not get possession of the continuation of John-street unless the new portion was first macadamised by the owner or those to whom he had sold allotments. The owners did not want their street macadamised at their own expense; but it was desirable, in the interests of the general public, that this should be made a public thoroughfare, and be macadamised for the convenience of traffic. Instances of this kind occurred all over the colony; and unless there was a conveyance of the private land to the local council, there could be no improvement made on private streets by the council for the benefit of the public, and even if the council took over such street, he doubted whether they could spend money on it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There would have to be a proclamation.

THE PREMIER: Such cases caused serious inconvenience. To take such land compulsorily for the purpose of a public street would be a hardship on the owner, in some instances, while generally the public convenience suffered. If an owner wished to reserve a line of street, he might put up posts as obstructions, so that the street could be used only for pedestrian traffic, as was the case in some portions of London.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Suppose the owner wanted to keep a private street open for some people, and not for the general public?

THE PREMIER: There were cases of that kind in London, where the streets were closed for a time periodically to assert the right of private ownership.

MR. OLDHAM: That was a disadvantage.

THE PREMIER: Yes, but it was an expedient which might be used. The new clause provided that, where a street had been open 12 months, it might be taken over by the council, with the approval of

the Governor, these being necessary safeguards.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That would be done without obtaining the fee simple.

THE PREMIER: Yes; the new clause would give to a municipality the right of user, but the fee simple would remain as before, unless it were voluntarily surrendered by the private owner. If the owner left such a thoroughfare open for public use during 12 months, the council should have power to dedicate that thoroughfare to public use and to spend money on it for making the street trafficable. In most cases, municipalities had improved such streets with general concurrence, and no one was aggrieved; yet it was desirable that a regular procedure should be provided, as in the new clause.

MR. HIGHAM supported the adoption of the clause, and said that instead of the minimum being 33ft., he desired to alter it to 25ft., which would do no harm, as the taking over of any such street would be optional with the council. In Perth and Fremantle, certain lanes had been open for more than 12 months, and were found to be a public convenience; but many of these lanes were not vested in the local council, although to all intents and purposes they were the property of the municipality. It was essential to give the municipalities the option of macadamising these lanes or streets to a minimum width of 25ft. He moved, as an amendment, that the words "thirty-three" be struck out and "twenty-five" inserted in lieu thereof.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he desired to move a prior amendment. As this was to be optional on the part of the municipal bodies, there could be no reason for limiting the width of any street or lane.

THE PREMIER: If the width were made very narrow, the Legislative Council would probably not pass the Bill. Objections of that kind had been raised previously.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Municipal Institutions Act already defined where a building could be erected for residence, and why should a municipal council be restricted from taking over a street or right-of-way of any width? If the council desired it and were willing to spend money on it, that council should have

the right to take over any such street or lane.

THE PREMIER: We must be reasonable in fixing the width, or the Bill would not pass.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There could be no possible reason in the objection.

THE PREMIER: There might be the objection, nevertheless.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the council wished to take over such rights-of-way, why should they not do so?

THE PREMIER: That argument was reasonable, but not practical.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There could be no objection to the proposal. It was not a question of allowing people to erect buildings facing such rights-of-way. If a council chose to take over a right-of-way only 3ft. wide, there was no reason why they should not be allowed to do so.

MR. A. FORREST: This amendment should not be pressed. Municipalities did not want to encourage 9ft. or 10ft. rights-of-way. Moreover, the amendment was not necessary at the present time, as the Bill was only a small amending measure which it was necessary to pass this session, and it would be endangered in another place by such an amendment. The previous amendment suggested by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) would meet the case, and would do away with the hardships at present suffered by many ratepayers in Perth, who, owing to living in streets of less than the requisite width, could not share in the council's expenditure on streets, though they were as heavily rated as other ratepayers. Rates could not be legally spent on such streets at the present time. Let this amendment (Mr. Higham's) be passed, and an amending Bill exhaustively dealing with this and other questions would be drawn up at the Municipal Conference which would meet next year at Bunbury, and afterwards the Bill would be submitted for the approval of Parliament.

HON. H. W. VENN: What logical objection could there be to the member for Central Murchison's amendment, which was only permissive? There were several rights-of-way in Perth, notably in the vicinity of St. George's Terrace, which it

was desirable the council should take over. In some cases, the private owner, not having the right to close the right-of-way, neglected its upkeep, and it became impassable. Occupants of houses abutting on such lanes had a legitimate grievance, and the amendment of the hon. member would permit the council to take over such thoroughfares, if so desired.

MR. HIGHAM: While admitting the logic of the contention that all rights-of-way of real benefit to the public should be taken over and improved by the municipality, still the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) should withdraw his amendment till an amending Bill could be brought in next year; and in this way the passing of the present Bill would not be imperilled. His (Mr. Higham's) amendment would considerably benefit not only Perth, but other municipalities, including North Fremantle. Next year he would do his best to get the Act amended in the direction indicated by the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth); but his own amendment would considerably relieve municipalities which wished to macadamise or otherwise improve lanes and small thoroughfares which had become, by user, practically the property of the public.

MR. WILSON supported the amendment of the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham). In Fremantle there were certain roads only 25ft. wide which, in the interests of the inhabitants, should be taken over by the council. While agreeing also that most rights-of-way now in existence might, with direct benefit to the public, be taken over by municipalities, it would be dangerous to give councils such wide powers in this Bill, for an opportunity would then be afforded to owners of private property to cut up their estates by narrow rights-of-way, which would be detrimental to the neighbourhood generally, and then pressure would be brought to bear on the municipality to take over such thoroughfares.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Act prevented that.

MR. WILSON: Unfortunately the practice had existed. Next session, a further amendment could be made for enabling municipalities to take over existing rights-of-way—say, those thoroughfares which had been in existence for 10 or 20 years—and limiting rights-of-way con-

structed in the future to a certain minimum width.

MR. OLDHAM: This was a burning question in Perth, where the council were collecting rates from people without power to give such ratepayers anything in return therefor. This state of affairs was outrageous. He supported the amendment of the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham), and the remarks of the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson). The other amendment for taking over all rights-of-way might induce property-owners to cut up their estates in a manner which would throw upon local councils the burden of effecting improvements on them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That would be impossible.

MR. OLDHAM: Nor was it desirable that the streets in a new municipality should be of less than a reasonable width.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Act prevented any such result.

MR. OLDHAM: Experience proved that the Act did not prevent these abuses. If the Act prevented them, how was it that so many estates had been cut up in this way during the past few years?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not since the Act was passed.

MR. OLDHAM: Yes, since the Act was passed. He hoped the Committee would not in any way jeopardise this amendment in the interests of people who could not help themselves, and that a Bill would be brought in next session which would prevent owners from cutting up land in a manner not conducive to the well-being of the community.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This was a proposal to enable local councils to take over existing streets. The principal Act forbade any man to cut up land without complying with the necessary restrictions—20ft. for a right-of-way, and 30ft. for a street. He had too much interest in obtaining a removal of this disability to imperil this Bill in any way. This had been quite a burning question. He knew of streets in this city 33ft. wide, and the council were collecting rates. There were some streets from 50 up to 100 links, and the council had no power to expend money upon them. If it was thought that the proposal would imperil the Bill, he was quite willing to give way,

and support the amendment of the member for Fremantle.

Amendment (Mr. Higham's) put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Title:

MR. SOLOMON: The elections would be coming on shortly, and he asked the Attorney General to give an interpretation of sub-section b, section 73, of the Municipal Institutions Act?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Members would know that no expression of opinion which fell from him would be binding on the minds of the court which had to interpret that section of the Act; but he knew what the hon. member was driving at. He (the Attorney General) took it that one view held was that where a person gave a proxy for a limited time, and went away for a trip, say to one of the other colonies, inasmuch as he was out of the colony he could not be resident in it. That, however, was a very narrow interpretation, and in his opinion the courts would not consider it in that narrow sense, but would say that so long as that man had an intention of returning, and was only away for a brief period, he was still a resident, though technically absent.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

LAND BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of 46 amendments, made by the Council, considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

No. 1, clause 3, paragraph 6, line 3, strike out "stock" and insert in lieu thereof "and small stock, including sheep, but not including pigs or goats":

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Clause 3 of the Bill stipulated that "fence" meant any substantial fence, not being a brush fence, proved to the satisfaction of the Minister to be sufficient to resist the trespass of great stock. By this amendment it was proposed that the fence should be sufficient, not only to resist the trespass of great stock, but small stock, including sheep, but not including pigs or goats. It was a very important matter. He was not prepared

to ask members to object to the amendment, but he would like them to consider it. At one time such an amendment would have been altogether unacceptable; but now it was not so bad, because for the most part people erected wire fencing, and had gone to much additional expense to put up one more wire, or to make the fence lower for resisting large stock and also sheep. He supposed all members agreed that the better the sort of fence that was put up, the more secure the property would be made. Under existing arrangements he did not think the expense would be much greater, seeing that the price of wire was low, and it was almost as cheap to put up a fence to keep out sheep as cattle. As he had said, he was not inclined to oppose the amendment.

Question put and passed, and the Council's amendment agreed to.

Nos. 2 to 25, inclusive—agreed to.

No 26—Clause 96, strike out "ten shillings" and insert "seven shillings and sixpence":

THE PREMIER moved that this amendment be not agreed to. The intention of it was to reduce the rent in the North-West division of the colony from 10s. per 1,000 acres to 7s. 6d.; and by the next amendment it was proposed to do the same in the Kimberley Division. His opinion was that neither of these proposals should be agreed to. It seemed to him that those who had moved in the matter in the Council did not understand the question clearly, in so amending the Bill as to reduce the rents in the North-West division and the Kimberley Division, leaving the Gascoyne (now called the Western Division) unaltered. In making this alteration the Council evidently overlooked the fact that the Kimberley Division had a stocking clause, which did not apply to any other part of the colony; and as most of the pastoral stations there were now stocked, the effect of that clause was to reduce their rents to 5s. a thousand acres. Probably the mover of the amendment in the Council did not know there was a stocking clause in operation, and other members seemed to have overlooked it, and they evidently regarded the question as one of reducing the rent from 10s. to 7s. 6d. He did not think the Kimberley dis-

trict was superior to the North-West Division; and for that reason, together with the fact that Kimberley had a stocking clause, the amendment should not be agreed to. A further reason was that the North-West Division was one of the oldest pastoral districts in the colony, containing a large quantity of splendid pastoral country with rich soil, and in good seasons certainly that district was superior to any other part of the colony. Most of the runs were fenced and improved, and had been held for a quarter of a century. Of course he could not forget that the district was subject to bad seasons; but, on the other hand, the lessees there were going to have an extended tenure of 30 years and to have protection for all their improvements; therefore he did not think any exception should be made in their favour as compared with any other part of the colony. It should be remembered also that the lessees in the more settled parts of the colony had to pay £1. per thousand acres, and they had no security of tenure, while there was also the right of free selection over their leaseholds; therefore he really thought the settlers in the North-West Division could not argue that an exception should be made in their favour as compared with the Gascoyne district, or what was now called the Western Division.

Motion—that the Council's amendment be not agreed to—put and passed.

No. 27—Clause 98, strike out "ten shillings" and insert "seven shillings and sixpence":

THE PREMIER moved that the amendment be not agreed to, for the same reasons as he had already stated.

Motion put and passed, and the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Amendments Nos. 28 to 46—agreed to.

Resolutions reported, and the report adopted.

Reasons for objecting to the Council's amendments No. 26 and 27 were drawn up by a Committee consisting of the Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Mr. Morgans, and Sir J. Forrest, and adopted as follow:—

The rent is not excessive, seeing that the term of the lease has been extended for 30 years, and that many of the leases affected have been much improved. 2. Should the reduction be made in the North-West and Kimberley divisions, it would require extending

to the Western and other divisions, which is not desirable. 3, The reduction proposed would adversely affect the revenue.

Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MINING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.

The Legislative Council having returned the Bill with one amendment, the same was now considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 22, line 3, strike out "or adjoining or abutting on":

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) moved that the Council's amendment be not agreed to. Possibly the Council did not fully understand why these words were placed in the clause. No doubt it was difficult to comprehend the clause, without going thoroughly into the provisions of the whole Bill from beginning to end. The clause provided that a person who had taken up a lease within a municipality, giving him a right to mine below the surface, might take, for mining purposes, the whole of any private land belonging to one owner within the boundaries of, or adjoining or abutting on, such claim or lease. The clause had reference only to mining below the surface. A man might take up a lease in a municipality with the right to mine to a depth of 200ft. below the surface, but he could not get there unless he had a right to commence operations on the surface of the ground. This clause enabled him, with the consent of the owner and on paying compensation, to take the land adjoining or abutting on the lease, if he could not agree with the owner of the land that he had actually leased. It might happen that the land the miner had leased would be covered with buildings, while the land adjoining it might be unoccupied.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The lease might be in respect of land lying entirely beneath a street.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Precisely: and the clause would enable the miner to take up a piece of land adjoining the street in order to get to his lease lying below the street's surface.

Motion put and passed, and Council's amendment disagreed to.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

Reasons for objecting to the Council's amendment were drawn up by a committee consisting of the Hon. R. W. Pennefather, Mr. Illingworth, and the Hon. H. B. Lefroy, and adopted as follow:—

The words are necessary to enable the owner of a lease to obtain land adjoining his property to sink a shaft, and erect buildings on it, when the owner of the land demised is willing to allow mining under his land, but not on the surface, as the property may have valuable buildings thereon.

Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION: LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of MR. MONGER, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the member for the Murray (Mr. George), on the ground of sickness.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1898-9.

On the motion of the PREMIER and TREASURER, the House resolved into Committee to consider the Estimates of expenditure from loan funds for the financial year ending June 30th, 1899.

IN COMMITTEE.

Vote, *Departmental*, £67,814 14s. 3d.:

THE PREMIER and TREASURER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the first item, said:—In moving that the Committee do now consider the Estimates of expenditure from loan funds for the 12 months ending 30th June, 1899, I do not propose to say much, for I think it unnecessary to do so. The Loan Estimates are submitted to Parliament with two objects—perhaps with more than two. One object is that the House may have an absolute control over the salaries of persons employed by the Government and paid from loan funds; and the next is that the House may have an absolute control over the works that have to be carried out from loan during the current year. Of course, hon. members are aware that the Loan Estimates do not initiate any new works, the works comprised in these Estimates having all been approved by this House under Loan Acts; so that no question of policy comes in, when discussing the Loan Estimates. The only question of policy, if it can be called a policy, is whether the country shall

spend loan moneys which are legally available, or whether it shall not do so. When I said no policy comes in, I meant to say that no question of new works to be undertaken arises in the discussion of the Loan Estimates. All questions connected with policy have been settled beforehand. I may say the desire of the Government, at the present time, is not to spend more loan money than is absolutely necessary. We do not want to spend any more loan money during the current year than we are compelled to do, and with that object I have done my best to reduce the Estimates; but with all my desire to reduce them, I have not been able to make them lower than the total of nearly £1,400,000. The works are so much in hand that it is impossible to reduce further. Members will at once see how it is proposed to spend this money. Passing over the departmental, that is the employment of officers, we find it is proposed that railways and tramways shall absorb £539,145; of which £180,979 is for rolling-stock. Of course a good deal of the money is already expended, in works going on; but it has all to be legally provided for during the current year. Then there are harbour and river improvements, the estimated cost being £259,669, of which £100,000 is for the harbour works at Fremantle, £30,000 for the Bunbury breakwater, £15,500 for the Carnarvon jetty, £13,500 for the Port Hedland jetty and approach road, £5,500 for the Wyndham jetty, £7,000 for the Bunbury jetty, £5,000 for the Ashburton jetty, and £65,000 for dredges and barges. These dredges and barges are for the Fremantle harbour works, and are just about being completed. They will soon be on their way to the colony. On water supply and sewerage for towns it is proposed to expend £29,000, £12,000 being for sewerage for Perth and Fremantle. It is proposed to spend £250,000 on the Coolgardie water supply scheme. I think that is the lowest amount we could estimate to spend this year, and in fact in my opinion the expenditure is rather under-estimated than over-estimated. On the development of goldfields and mineral resources it is proposed to spend £119,246, made up as shown on page 16 of the Estimates. On roads and bridges

we propose to spend £8,000, and for the development of agriculture (administered by the Lands Department) £5,000. In regard to immigration, on which we do not propose to spend much, the estimate is £2,000. Then there is £100,000 for charges and expenses of raising loans, which really means the discount on loans. From pages 20 to 29, inclusive, there are returns showing the probable state of the loan undertakings on the 30th June, 1899, and the anticipated progress of the works during the year, the progress made during the past year also being indicated, and the arrangement is, I think, a very valuable one. I beg to move the adoption of the first item.

[Debate ensued on the Loan Estimates generally.]

MR. DOHERTY, referring to items "Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, £800," and "Cement tester, £300," asked the Director of Public Works to give some information.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: It was desirable the hon. member should say what information he wanted.

MR. DOHERTY: In regard to the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, what was the reason for his resignation? What was his position with regard to the department generally?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: During the past few days this officer had tendered his resignation, and the Government had now no intention of filling up the post again. Of course the object was, as far as possible, to reconstruct the whole department of the Engineer-in-Chief. Though the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief had thought fit during the past few days to tender his resignation, the salary was provided upon the Estimates for the whole of the year: but it was not intended to expend the total amount.

At 6.24 p.m. the CHAIRMAN left the chair.

At 7.30 the CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (resuming): Replying further to the question of the member for North

Fremantle (Mr. Doherty), the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, in resigning, had decided to take this step only within the last few days, and no doubt he had his own reasons for doing so. His salary had been provided in the Estimates for the year; but a question of granting three months' leave was now under consideration, and, if the request were acceded to, a portion of the salary would thus be absorbed. This officer had been in the service for some time, and performed his duties satisfactorily in connection with the harbour works at Fremantle as resident engineer. During the time when the traffic difficulty became so serious at Fremantle, a special effort was made to provide increased accommodation in the river, and at that period Mr. McDonald being then in charge of the work, made strenuous efforts to overcome the difficulty, and it was greatly owing to his energy that the difficulty was overcome in so satisfactory a manner. The Government did not intend to fill the position again, and the office would be abolished entirely as part of the reorganisation of the Engineer-in-Chief's Department; consequently a saving on this and some other items would be effected, though he would not ask the Committee to interfere with the items as printed, but leave the department to effect such economy as was practicable, upon his assurance that no amount would be expended unnecessarily. As the larger works were being finished, and the only large work in hand would then be the Coolgardie goldfields water scheme, it was not considered necessary to continue the office of Assistant Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. DOHERTY: The remarks of the Minister came with a good grace in connection with this officer, and it was gratifying to hear that he had performed good service for the colony. Referring to the item of £300 for cement tests, he understood the officer who had been doing this work was not now in the service. Was it intended to continue this position? The testing of cement, especially in view of the large amount which would be required for the Coolgardie water scheme, was very desirable.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The officer previously filling the position as tester of cement had re-

signed, and another was appointed in his place, as the testing of cement would be necessary in carrying out the Coolgardie water scheme, where a large quantity of cement would be used.

Item, Stores manager, £250:

Mr. HOLMES: Salaries for a stores manager and a staff had already been passed in the general Estimates.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Those items in the general Estimates had reference to the Railway Department only.

Mr. HOLMES: On these Loan Estimates there was a proposed increase in the expenditure of £885. Was it necessary to have these stores officers in addition to those in the Railway Department, and was it necessary to increase the staff?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Stores Department provided for in these Estimates was connected with Public Works, and was distinct from Railway stores. The hon. member would notice, in the report, that some of the officers had been dispensed with; also, since the Estimates had been framed, others were dispensed with. The duties of this branch included not only the care and distribution of stores, but looking after the property of the department, which was very considerable, all over the colony. Some record must be kept of such property, so as to keep in touch with officers entrusted with Government stores. In the report of the department, it would be found that he (the Director) was in favour of remodeling the stores branch altogether; and ultimately, when this had been arranged, it might be possible to dispense with the Public Works stores branch, or rather to amalgamate it with the general stores of the colony; but, until that could be done, this branch must be retained. Hon. members would be glad to hear that a rule had been made to the effect that no department could purchase stores except through this branch. Previously the various departments, after having obtained authority to do so, bought their stores from private merchants, if they could not get them from the departmental contractor. The practice was now a thing of the past, and every requisition had to pass through this branch. The innova-

tion had resulted in a considerable saving, which probably amounted to more than the salaries of the stores branch officers; and the work was being done much more systematically than under the old system.

MR. DOHERTY: It was pleasant to hear that some alteration had been made in the system of buying stores for the Government departments. It was currently reported and believed that a good deal of money had been wasted in this direction; in fact, it was publicly stated that officers who bought goods for their departments frequently received commissions from the sellers. These things were not pleasant to hear, nor were they pleasant to repeat in this House; nevertheless the rumour was current in Perth and Fremantle. Another statement current was that the piles used in the construction of the new wharf at Fremantle had been bought at 2s. 6d. per foot; whereas they could have been procured from any firm in the trade for 1s. 3d. The purchase of Government stores should be absolutely in the hands of one department, in charge of one man, whose remuneration should be sufficient to keep him honest, or honest enough to decline commissions from firms with which the department dealt.

THE PREMIER: Nothing would keep an unprincipled man honest.

MR. DOHERTY: Unfortunately that was true; nevertheless, if the buying department were strictly organised, irregularities could be immediately detected; but when purchases were made by many individual officers throughout the colony, the Government must frequently pay more than was necessary.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: With regard to the piles of which the hon. member spoke, there was undoubtedly a great difference between the price paid for them and the price at which the contractors should have delivered them; but, when those piles were required, the contractors were unable to deliver them, for they were the general contractors to the Government for the supply of timber in the different parts of the colony, and could not fill this particular order, owing to the great demand existing at the time. Hence the department had to go outside the contractors and purchase the

piles elsewhere. The arrangement was made for the purpose of expediting the work, and none regretted more than he that a higher price had to be paid. The difference in price was not so great as 50 per cent. There was, in respect of the very long piles, a difference probably of 30 per cent. in price; but with regard to the shorter ones, there was no such great difference between the contract price and the actual figure paid. He assured the hon. member that this occurrence could hardly be repeated, because the departmental arrangements had been much improved, and the supply of timber had greatly increased. With regard to the hon. member's suggestion as to the purchasing of Government stores, the present arrangements would prevent the purchasing by officers outside the stores branch. The officer in charge of that branch was carrying out his work economically and systematically, and in a style which gave much satisfaction.

MR. WILSON: All would admit there were times, in the course of construction of public works, when the matter of price was not so much the question for consideration as speed in delivery. No doubt the department was in that position when the timber for piles was purchased. But how was it that not only those piles, but nearly all the timber for the department, was purchased from one firm? It appeared that, for about 12 months, the whole of the timber was purchased at a very excessive price.

THE PREMIER: Other firms, it was said, could not supply it.

MR. WILSON: Apparently no other firm got a chance.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

MR. WILSON: Undoubtedly, all the mills in the colony were very busy.

THE PREMIER: And no doubt they made a good deal out of the Government.

MR. WILSON: But no other timber merchants in the colony had the chance of supplying timber to the Government; and the excessive price paid for piles was a mere bagatelle compared with the price paid for timber generally.

THE PREMIER: To Messrs. Millar Bros.?

MR. WILSON: Yes. The Government stores required careful supervision, which they had not received in the past. He would like to know definitely when the

Director of Works proposed to take stock. In reply to certain questions asked in the House, it was stated that stock had not been taken since 1890.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: At the time that question was answered, the stock sheets had not been prepared; but the recent removal of the stores at Fremantle to the new premises had enabled the department to take stock correctly.

MR. WILSON: Since the 13th September?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; the stock-taking was then in progress.

MR. WILSON: Had stock been taken since the 13th September?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; stock-taking was going on now.

MR. WILSON: It was most serious that there had been no stock-taking of half a million pounds' worth of stores since 1890.

THE PREMIER: The department was moving into new premises, and was taking stock of all goods as brought in.

MR. WILSON: There was supposed to be half a million pounds' worth of stores in stock.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: £400,000 worth.

HON. H. W. VENN: The Audit Department satisfied itself on the question of stock in hand.

MR. WILSON: No; the Audit Department did not do so. The Auditor General ought to have insisted on stock being taken, but he had not done so. That was in evidence. There was in the Financial Statement an alleged asset of £518,000 represented by stock, and the possibilities were that the actual value of that item was £350,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; the actual value was much more than that.

MR. WILSON: Nothing had been written off for depreciation for eight years. The asset was kept up at the invoice value. As an instance, there was certain machinery bought for use in connection with a bridge at Fremantle. The work was not carried out, the machinery was put into stock, and lay there for several years. Had not that machinery depreciated?

THE PREMIER: There was some charge made by the stores for contingencies, he believed.

MR. WILSON: No; the Premier's reply to the question to which he referred was that nothing had been written off for depreciation.

THE PREMIER: But the storekeeper had some rule to the effect that he did not charge the exact price of the goods.

MR. WILSON: But that had nothing to do with the value of the stores as set down in the Financial Statement. That value was not affected by any charge made by the stores manager when handling the stock.

THE PREMIER: If he sold, he wanted 20 per cent.

MR. WILSON: It was the poor, long-suffering public again. If they wanted to buy at £5, the person who sold wanted them to pay £6. We had this enormous quantity of stock put down at full invoice value, and he would guarantee that if stock were taken by an independent person, it would be found there was 25 per cent. depreciation; and instead of there being £518,000 worth of stock, there would not be actual value for £400,000.

THE PREMIER: The stuff was being shifted, and we would have a good report.

MR. WILSON: It was a matter for regret that the House would be prorogued before that report could be produced.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: There was no better opportunity than that now afforded for taking stock. Although it was stated some time ago that stock had not been taken, that allegation only referred to the question as regarded the audit. The opportunity now afforded in removing the stock from the old position to the new would result in complete stock-sheets being prepared, and a correct balance showing the value. With regard to depreciation, if the hon. member would look into the matter he would find that it was not so great as supposed, because the item included £100,000 worth of rails, and those rails would not depreciate anything at all, but would be available for the works in the colony, and consequently they would be charged to the various votes immediately they were put into the requirements of those different works. Then there were many of the others, including steel, iron, and wire, and materials of various kinds, so that the depreciation could not be very great. A very good report would be shown. Since

the return was issued, a great deal of that stock had been used and charged to the various votes, and, in fact, he thought that what was now left was of the value of something under £300,000.

Item passed.

Item, allowances and travelling expense, £5,000 :

MR. DOHERTY : This amount seemed to be very heavy. We did not know in what particular way the money was to be used. He felt diffident about saying anything in relation to these items, because his words might be criticised by some Government official to-morrow or the next day. It was quite possible that those gentlemen who received the allowances and travelling expenses might call a meeting together, and condemn him as a representative of the people for taking any exception to an item in this House. If a member of Parliament was not to be allowed a free hand, and was not to be independent, God help the country. If one could not stand up and express an opinion about any item the Government might introduce or show upon the Estimates, responsible government ceased. He referred to the action taken by the locomotive superintendent's workmen in condemning a member of this House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Why did not the hon. member bring it up as a question of privilege?

THE PREMIER : There were 500 of them.

MR. DOHERTY : It would probably intimidate a member on a future occasion from really speaking his mind, if he did not happen to be independent. Without doubt, this matter would come before the Director of Works, and for the sake of the honour of the House and the independence of members, he (Mr. Doherty) hoped the hon. gentleman would deal with it as he ought. It was the same as if a grocer had a manager, and the assistants came out and said the manager was a very fine fellow. The public might not properly understand the question, and might be led to think some injury was being done. When that item was brought before the Committee, it was not the individual man he objected to, but he strongly objected to an amount of £2,100 being paid for the same work as was previously carried out for £500. £1,600 was an item, in this country.

[THE PREMIER : Hear, hear.] And while that item was being added to the Estimates some workmen in the Government stores had their wages reduced to the extent of 1s. to 2s. per day, the men who could least afford it being those who had to submit to a reduction. He hoped the Minister would give some idea of the action he intended to take with regard to public servants trying to intimidate members of the House.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS : £5,000 was for allowances and travelling expenses. It would be found that the amount was very much less than that last year, and although £5,000 was entered, the Government would endeavour as far as possible to keep expenditure down. If we were going to carry out the work, of course we must make provision for travelling and other expenses. With regard to the other matter, perhaps it was better not to bring it up. Although the hon. member said he was alluding to the item and not to the officer, yet he had stated that it was a man named Campbell, whom he did not know personally, and who was the wrong sort of man for him to associate with. He (the Minister) thought the hon. member did refer to the person, and it was unfortunate that he alluded to him in the way he did. He (the Minister) had not received any resolutions, but when those resolutions came before him, he would deal with them as he thought they ought to be dealt with. With all deference to Mr. Campbell, he was of opinion that mass meetings of this kind were more of a disadvantage. Although the men no doubt had taken an exceptional course in showing their disapproval, still the remarks of the hon. member called forth from these men an expression of feeling. As he (the Minister) had said, when the hon. member made the remarks referred to, he was very sorry the expressions had been used ; and he thought the hon. member himself would agree that, whilst fair criticism should be exercised and everything be said that should be uttered with regard to these matters, it was just as well not to deal with individuals in the way that officer was dealt with. It was rather unfortunate that the meeting had been held ; and, as he had said, when the resolutions came before him, he would take the course which he

deemed best. He did not think they were of any advantage to the officer concerned.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Railways and Tramways, £539,145 13s. 9d.:

Item, Kalgoorlie-Boulder railway, £6,073 13s. 9d.:

MR. MORAN asked the Minister for information.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Most of the money had been spent, so there was not very much available. What was available was required for various works in progress, and for works which it was contemplated to carry out.

Item passed.

Item, Additions and improvements to opened railways, £47,547 1s. 0d.:

MR. LEAKE: £301,000 was expended up to June 30th; but in the general estimates of receipts and expenditure the amount expended on railways was £827,000. What was the meaning of that?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: £827,000 was the whole amount available; and that amount had been expended, less the £47,000.

THE PREMIER: £827,000 was from the beginning, about 1896, he thought.

MR. LEAKE: It was not the yearly expenditure?

THE PREMIER: The £47,000 was the balance.

MR. LEAKE, referring to Rolling stock, £180,979 15s. 1d.: Presumably, this was an addition. What was the nature of the additions and improvements?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: That was a different thing, relating to various works in connection with the lines generally. For instance, all classes of additions, such as siding platforms, station buildings, and anything necessary to be carried out on lines constructed, and on which additions were required. There had been a relaying of various lines. We had relaid 50 miles of the Yilgarn line, costing some £12,000, which had been expended out of the £47,000, and there had been other work in connection with relaying.

MR. LEAKE: Was it proposed to carry out these additions and improvements upon railways on the same scale of magnificence as had been indulged in during the last few months; particularly on the Bridgetown railway?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: That was railway construction.

MR. LEAKE: That might be so, but all these buildings would require to be added to and improved.

MR. WILSON: Did the Premier say the expenditure of £827,000 on opened railways had taken place from 1896?

THE PREMIER: From the time we consolidated all our loans.

MR. WILSON: In about two years?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. WILSON: We had only opened about 300 miles of railways during that time. How could that expenditure have been incurred?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: There was £170,000 for water supply in connection with these lines, new tanks having to be built right away from Chidlow's Well to Kalgoorlie, and that sum was included in the amount referred to. There was also £210,000 for land resumption in different parts of the colony, and if members put the two items together they would see these amounted to about £400,000. In addition to that, we had to carry out works which should have been carried out originally from the construction vote. At Kalgoorlie, for instance, we had to carry out works at a cost of £30,000; for when the new line was designed there was not sufficient accommodation provided, and not enough money voted to carry out the various works; consequently funds had to come from the "additions and improvements" vote. In addition to that there had been crossings to be provided for on various lines, these involving a large expenditure; and numerous works besides had been carried out. On the Great Southern railway, when taken over, we had to relay a great portion with new sleepers, which cost about £13,000.

MR. EWING: Could the Minister say how much had been spent on the elaborate stations in and about Perth, and on the railway lines generally? The hon. gentleman said the sum of £400,000 of this item was expended last year.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Not last year, but during the last two years.

MR. EWING: A large amount had been expended in resuming land. He noticed from the items last year, and previously, that a very large sum was voted under different headings, for the purpose of paying for land resumption. No doubt the Minister spoke advisedly when he said £210,000 had been spent on resuming land; but surely he could not have spent the amount on resumption represented by the various votes passed in this House, together with an additional £210,000 which was wrapped up in this item. We had no particulars at all. If this money had been spent for land resumption, it should appear in some way under a heading which members could understand.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: In the annual report for this year and last, particulars were given.

MR. EWING: Surely the Minister did not expect members to go through the whole of the Public Works elaborate reports prepared by his officials, which would take some weeks to understand, let alone weeks of reading. If £210,000 was paid for land resumption under this item, it should appear in such a way that members would be able to criticise the expenditure. He was at a loss to understand why it should be necessary to wrap up the expenditure in such a way that members could not tell what they were debating.

THE PREMIER: If members would not take any trouble to read the reports, they might not understand these items. The reports were provided for members to read.

MR. EWING: Could any hon member be expected to know where to find information explaining the amounts expended for resumption of land? A private member could not be expected to look in the departmental reports for such information.

THE PREMIER: Members should give some time to their public duties, surely.

MR. EWING: But the Ministry should not make the duties of members more onerous than they ought to be, but should bring down their Estimates in such a form that any ordinary member could understand them. The explanation of the Dir-

ector of Works showed that this item was undoubtedly misleading, especially in regard to the £210,000 expended on land resumption and not on improvements to opened railways. On these items the Minister had not given to members the opportunity they should justly and reasonably look for.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: If the hon. member expected him to be a walking encyclopædia of general information, the hon. member was mistaken. In the reports of the department for the last two years, a full account was given of what had been done in the resumption of land and in other expenditure; and in the report for this year the same information was given in a clear manner, and this was all that the department could be expected to do in supplying information to members. He would only be too pleased to answer any question in reference to any special item, but he could not be expected to supply all the information which was already contained in the annual report laid before Parliament. He could not be expected to give all the details of land resumption in connection with this item, when those details were already before hon. members in a full form, if they would look at them in the annual report. Great care and attention were given to the preparation of that report, for making the information as clear as possible in relation to the whole of the proceedings of the Public Works Department.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister did not appear to understand the hon. member's criticism. He meant that these Estimates and reports were more calculated to mislead than inform the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon member did not say that.

MR. LEAKE: No; the hon. member did not say it, but he (Mr. Leake) would say it.

MR. EWING: Why not put all the land resumption items under one heading?

MR. LEAKE: Yes; why not give these a heading to themselves? In looking for expenditure on land resumption, nobody but a Minister would think of looking for this information under the heading of "Additions and improvements to opened railways." Of course the Director of

Works knew where to look for them, because he was omniscient.

THE PREMIER: The information had been given in this form each year since 1896.

MR. LEAKE: That was no reason why members should continue to be hoodwinked; and now that they had tripped up the Minister, they must insist on fuller information being given in the Estimates. The accounts were absolutely misleading, for they took back that information which members were clearly entitled to have.

THE PREMIER: The information was given to members once, in the annual report.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; when squeezed out of the Government they did give some information; but now that members had got it, they did not know whether it was accurate. Was there any other item hidden under this heading, and which the words did not imply or indicate?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: If hon. members would turn to the Loan Estimates of 1896-7, they would find in column 7 a statement showing "Progress anticipated to be made during the year;" also "Completion of the purchase of land resumed for railway purposes at Perth and other places." This year, no particulars of land resumption were given, because land was not being resumed this year.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister could not expect hon. members to commit all those things to memory.

MR. VOSPER: Under this item, certain amounts had been expended for purchase of land, and there was nothing to show, in the Estimates, that any land had been purchased.

THE PREMIER: Where did the hon. member think the Government got the money for resuming all this land—out of what vote?

MR. VOSPER: The cost of resuming land was here disguised under a totally different heading, whereas it should be put as a separate item.

THE PREMIER: If more headings had been put in when this form of estimates was prepared in 1896, it would have been more convenient, no doubt; but the Estimates for this year were following in the same style as those for the two previous

years. It was too late to make the alteration now, because the heading was not in the form of the Estimates.

MR. OLDHAM: When the Director of Works admitted he was not a walking encyclopædia, the Minister's best friend would not accuse him of knowing anything, even in a common-sense way, about book-keeping.

MR. A. FORREST: He understood book-keeping all right.

MR. OLDHAM: It was to be hoped that in the 12 months' grace which was to be given to the Minister, he would be able to improve his book-keeping, and be able to invent some reasonable and intelligent method of book-keeping, whereby the members of the House could be enabled to understand what was placed before them.

MR. MORAN: It could not be done, in some cases.

MR. OLDHAM: It could not be done in the case of the meagre intelligence of the hon. member. Was it possible to connect land resumption with this item? He would now call attention to another matter. He had a copy of—

THE CHAIRMAN: Had this anything to do with the item before the Committee?

MR. OLDHAM: It had not anything particular to do with this item.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then it would be out of order.

MR. OLDHAM: It came under the heading of "improvements to railways."

THE CHAIRMAN: But not under this item.

MR. OLDHAM: No; he did not think it was an improvement to a railway, but rather a disadvantage to a railway. However, he would deal with the matter later on.

MR. MORAN: It was desirable that the form of presenting the Estimates should state the information more plainly. Members did not believe in wasting their precious time looking up particulars of these matters in the annual reports; and, having a Minister to give information, some use should be made of him, and thereby spare any strain on the intelligence of members. Was this land resumed before or after a railway was opened?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: After, certainly. The item said, "opened rail-

ways." He was not responsible, in this instance, for the framing of the schedule of the Loan Act, and under that schedule the item was "additions and improvements to opened railways;" therefore these Estimates for each year showed, in that continuing form, the works on which the money was expended. There was no land resumption provided for in this year's Estimates, except for a very small amount.

MR. EWING: What had been done with the £47,000?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Half of that amount had been expended as he had already explained, and £13,000 had been expended in relaying the Yilgarn line with heavier rails; also about £7,000 expended in connection with the building of a reservoir at Chidlow's Well, besides other works to improve the reservoir. Various other works were going on in the construction of sidings and additions on the South Western railway, for accommodating the timber mills, and some of the stations were being moved from the present positions and placed so as to serve the settlers, while also being of use to the timber mills. All land resumptions in connection with new lines were provided for in the item for each particular line, and the railway construction included an amount sufficient for any land resumption.

MR. MORAN: It would be better to have land resumption under a separate heading.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Yes; that would be better, and the present method rather put him in a false position in having to explain this item.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The separate heading ought to have been in the loan schedule of 1896.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; it ought to have been put in then.

MR. OLDHAM: Would this item of £47,547 ls. liquidate all present liabilities in connection with works already done?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Yes.

Item passed.

Item, railway workshops, £20,176:

MR. DOHERTY: Where were these workshops?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member could hardly be serious, for he knew that the shops were to be constructed at Midland Junction.

Item passed.

Item, Rolling Stock, £180,979 15s. 1d.:

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Estimates showed that provision was made last year for the expenditure on rolling stock of £300,000; that the actual expenditure had been £561,498 7s. 9d.; and, in the face of that extra expenditure of over £261,000, it was now proposed to spend £180,979 for the coming year. This department required a good deal of watching. While we must have rolling stock, a line must be drawn somewhere, and the time had arrived when the purchase of fresh rolling stock should be prevented. All the railway systems of the eastern colonies had suffered severely by the tremendous waste resulting from the overstocking of this particular department of the railways. However, as practically all the money had been spent, it was useless to alter this particular item; nevertheless, it should be understood by Parliament that sufficient rolling stock had been provided for some years to come, and that there was to be no increase of this vote. Surely the department had any quantity of rolling stock for the work to be performed.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Not only would the whole of this vote be expended, but he was confident that the House would yet be asked for more money for rolling stock, which was not a discouraging statement, because the necessity for an increase in this item was evidence of the prosperity of the railways, provided the stock could be profitably used. He would not be a party to ordering rolling stock unless it was absolutely necessary. He was keeping a tight hand on this expenditure. The development of the Collie coalfield must result in the employment of a very large proportion of the trucks in hand, and, if there was a proportionate development in the timber and other industries of the colony, more money would be required. He thanked the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) for his suggestions. There was every necessity for care with regard to this item, for it was possible to err by ordering too

much ; but more stock would no doubt be required.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Let us hope business would warrant it.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Harbour and River Improvements, £259,669 12s. 10d. :

Item, Fremantle Harbour Works (including cable to Rottnest), £100,000 :

MR. HIGHAM : It was regrettable that a much larger amount had not been provided for expenditure this year. Much good would be done if the approaches to the harbour were made easier, by dredging, than at present. More points and other conveniences should be provided for the railway traffic on the wharves already constructed. The Fremantle Chamber of Commerce had asked for these points, but, so far, without result. The proper lighting of the wharves required attention. Passengers at night had to stumble across the wharves among cargo and trucks, and through defective approaches, at the risk of life and limb, dodging moving locomotives. Apparently it was impossible to persuade the Minister to erect three or four arc lamps on the wharves. The harbour works were under the control of two or three different departments—the Harbour Works Department, under the Engineer-in-Chief, the Railway Department, under the Minister for Railways, and the Customs Department, under the Premier ; and the public could get no satisfaction from any of them. It was time these departments realised that they were the servants of the public, and that, in all matters affecting public interests, it was their duty to work for the public good. Without posing as an alarmist, he must point out that the cable to Rottnest should be procured and laid at the earliest possible moment.

MR. MORAN : In case of war ?

MR. HIGHAM : Yes, and for the safety of the shipping.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS : Of this item, £71,639 would be unexpended at the end of the year ; therefore there would be some money to carry on works next year. With regard to the hon. member's expression of regret that no more than £100,000 had been provided, it should be recollected that a great deal of

the very heavy work had been completed ; and this sum was considered sufficient to carry on the remaining works with all necessary despatch. It was expected that the new dredges and barges now under order would come to hand during the early part of the year ; and, towards the close of the financial year, much good work ought to be accomplished by these vessels ; consequently the expenditure would be increased during the last two or three months of the financial year. The hon. member must not forget that this work was incomplete, and that it was only to satisfy the demands of the shipping interests, and to provide for their convenience, that ships were now permitted to enter the river at all, notwithstanding the incomplete state of the works ; therefore, if there were shortcomings and inconveniences, shippers and other residents of Fremantle interested should make due allowance for the difficulties in the way, and for the incomplete state of the wharves. The matter of lighting was being attended to as quickly as possible, but it would take some little time to get the work put in hand.

MR. SOLOMON : Had the sheds been taken into consideration in this vote ? Shipping people at Fremantle had requested the Government to erect sheds at once, so that goods could be sheltered and properly cared for, thus facilitating the despatch of vessels. Had anything been done in this regard ?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS : The matter was still under consideration, and would be attended to as soon as possible. There was some discussion now in progress with the Chamber of Commerce with regard to it.

MR. HIGHAM : In vulgar phrase, the ship was being spoilt for the want of a pennyworth of tar. The whole scheme was being retarded by the lack of attention to minor details. The question of erecting sheds was being considered 18 months ago. Why should the wharf arrangements be allowed to be so inconvenient for the want of a few thousand pounds ?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS : If the sheds were now in existence, they could not be used.

MR. HIGHAM : Why not ? There would be no satisfaction amongst ship-owners

and consignees until there was proper accommodation. He believed that plans for the sheds were in existence.

MR. OLDHAM: No doubt hon. members for the various Fremantle constituencies would be highly gratified by the replies just given to their questions by the Director of Public Works.

THE PREMIER: No doubt the hon. member himself was gratified.

MR. OLDHAM said he was, and he would try to show it. Every hon. member looked upon the Fremantle harbour works as a national undertaking, necessary not only for Fremantle, but for the satisfactory development of the commerce of the colony. If we could accommodate people who brought goods here, it was incumbent upon the Government to do so. As the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) said, the want of despatch on the part of the Government with regard to these works was sickening.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: The hon. member previously grumbled about our going too fast.

MR. OLDHAM: Not at the Government going too fast, but at the way in which they were absolutely throwing the money into the river. They had better throw it into the sheds than into the river. He had seen at Fremantle offices replete with every modern convenience—not offices, but drawing-rooms. There seemed to have been sufficient money spent in the offices in relation to the construction of these harbour works to have built a receiving shed 250 yards long.

A MEMBER: There was a carpet which cost 100 guineas.

MR. OLDHAM: It was desirable to draw attention to the extravagant methods pursued by the officers controlled by the Director of Public Works. This Minister seemed to have no conception of economy, and no idea that it was more desirable to expend the money upon works which would be reproductive than upon superfluities. What was the good of building an office costing £2,000 or £3,000 for works of this description? He had known works carried out in the old country, notably the Manchester Ship Canal, which cost considerably more money than this work the Minister was undertaking, and all the draftsman-ship

was done in an office about 30 feet by 60 feet.

MR. MORGANS: Oh, no.

MR. OLDHAM: The work was carried out in an office much smaller than the Fremantle building. He also wanted to point out another extravagance, this being in relation to harbours and rivers improvements. The country was perfectly willing to expend as much money as was necessary upon the improvement of the harbour at Fremantle, but he sincerely hoped the Government would not throw the money away into the river. He saw one of the most remarkable spectacles he ever witnessed in his life when he was at Fremantle. They had an ordinary harbour dredge scooping stuff up from the bottom of the river and delivering it into a barge, and strange to say, they had on this barge men with shovels throwing it back into the river again. That was an absolute fact, though it might seem awfully strange.

THE PREMIER: Was it the same place?

MR. OLDHAM: Exactly the same place. How long would the House stand this? The Minister was responsible for it.

MR. HOLMES: The explanation of the Minister was not satisfactory to him. The Minister had stated that ships had been allowed to go there as a matter of convenience. He thought the Government should assist the shipping in every way possible. We had an electric lighting plant at Fremantle in close proximity to the wharf, yet in spite of all attempts to force the hands of the Government the wharf was left in a state of absolute darkness at night. There was a mile of wharf constructed at Fremantle, and no light of any description was placed on it. A German mail steamer came in at nine o'clock at night, and the harbour was lit up, as was also the boat; but the jetty was in darkness, and passengers fell over railway lines, trucks, and timber thrown about the jetty in all directions. If there were an election to-morrow, the Fremantle people would return an Oppositionist.

THE PREMIER: Then they would not be very grateful.

Item passed.

Item, Fremantle dock and slip, £7,000.

MR. SOLOMON asked what class of vessel could be accommodated, and

whether it would really be of use at all for a vessel of any size?

MR. HIGHAM: Would the Director of Works say whether he had received any reports on this slip, and whether it was possible to put one of our dredges on it as at present constructed? As far as he (Mr. Higham) knew, the slip had been completed for the last three or four months, and yet, notwithstanding the fact that every dredge we had in Fremantle at the present time needed to go on this slip, we saw week after week, and month after month, that the slip was not utilised. He would like to have some explanation. If there were some defects or omissions on the part of officers, it was about time the House knew something of them.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: All the information the hon. member asked for on this matter was, he thought, given a few weeks ago. The slip was of a temporary character, and it would certainly answer our purposes for some time. Up to the end of June it cost £14,751. There was some machinery to be added to it, and a great portion of the machinery could be utilised eventually in connection with the principal dock and slip. He had asked for a report to be made upon the subject; but it was only about a fortnight ago that questions were put relative to the subject, and in the meantime the department had a great deal of work to do in relation to other matters. He was looking into the subject, and if there was anything to be said about it later on he would be glad to answer any questions.

A MEMBER: When did the Minister intend to use it?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: As soon as it was ready. The report of the 28th July said the work was well advanced, and the hauling machinery was ready for working. It was then thought that the slip would be ready in from six to eight weeks.

MR. LEAKE: The Director of Works, he understood, said this temporary slip had cost £15,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: It would save its cost two or three times over.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister evidently did not think it would hold one of the Government's big dredges.

THE PREMIER: That was the intention.

MR. LEAKE: It would not carry out that object. £14,750 had been spent on it up to 30th June, and another £7,000 was voted this year, making £21,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: The £7,000 was not going to be expended only on that. There were other items.

MR. LEAKE: Here we were with another misleading heading, "Fremantle dock and slip." Nobody in the wildest dreams expected there was going to be anything spent on the dock. Would the Minister kindly take members into his confidence again, and say by what process of account-keeping he included in this item something foreign to what was indicated by the heading? The members for Fremantle would find themselves either without a slip or else possessed of a slip which was of no use at all.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: A portion of the £7,000 provided here was to complete this temporary slip. Provision was always made for contingencies. If the amount was not required it would not be spent. There might be some other contingency in connection with the dock itself, consequently provision was here made.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister had misled himself and not the House on this occasion. He understood the Minister to say there were items included in the £7,000 which were in no way connected with the dock and slip.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; that was not so.

MR. HOLMES: Was it a fact that there had been three distinct officers concerned in the construction of the dock and slip, and not one of them would accept any responsibility in connection with it? That was how the thing was hung up at present. The slip was completed as far as construction was concerned, but none of these officers would accept any responsibility.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member professed to know all about it, and he had better explain.

MR. WILSON: The slip was commenced two years ago.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; it was commenced last November.

should be facilities for repairing the largest vessels here, so that they might not have to go to other colonies. Surely the Fremantle members had done no harm by calling attention to these matters. More fuss had been made by the member for Coolgardie than by them. If he (Mr. Solomon) saw anything going wrong, or requiring the attention of the Government, he would always do his best to have it rectified.

MR. WILSON took exception to the Premier's remarks. The right hon. gentleman had no right to say the complaints originated in the inventive minds of members opposite.

THE PREMIER said he did not say "opposite." He referred to all hon. members who were complaining in respect of this matter.

MR. WILSON: It was a well known fact that the slip ought to have been finished some months ago. It had been found that the slip would not work.

THE PREMIER said he had never found that out.

MR. WILSON challenged the Director of Works to answer him.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: The hon. member knew there was no proof of that statement.

MR. WILSON: Unless the slip had required rebuilding, all this money would never have been spent on it.

MR. LEAKE: What might happen was that some day the Director of Works would require to raise one of those heavy dredges to the top of this slip. Then the problem would be to get it down, and that would be done by pulling a string, or something of that kind; but all were well aware that the officers of the Works Department invariably pulled the wrong string at the wrong time. As soon as they pulled the string, this heavy boat would slide off the slip.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: That was what it was intended to do.

MR. LEAKE: Up to that point the Minister was right; but he had not calculated on the impetus which the boat would have when it got off the slip.

THE PREMIER: It would be let down steadily.

MR. LEAKE: It would either bump against the mole on the opposite side of

the waterway, or would squash some incoming steamer.

THE PREMIER: The boat would be held back by a chain or drag.

MR. LEAKE: There was nothing in the Works Department strong enough to hold it.

THE PREMIER: If it could be pulled up, surely it could be let down.

MR. LEAKE: The explanation he had just given, though not rendered in scientific terms, was a correct statement of the position, as would be found if the Engineer-in-Chief were interrogated on the subject. This was the real objection which was taken to the slip, in regard not only to its construction, but to its site; for whilst the ship or boat was being got into the cradle preparatory to hauling it up, the entrance to the harbour would be blocked.

MR. OLDHAM: The position in respect to this item was the same as that in regard to a previous item, "improvements to existing railways." The department had no right to couple these two items, the dock and slip, in one.

MR. MORGANS: The total amount was only £7,000.

MR. OLDHAM: No statute could compel the coupling of these items.

THE PREMIER: The statute provided for their being put together in the Estimates.

MR. OLDHAM: The slip had no connection with the dock.

THE PREMIER: It had. Let the hon. member read the Loan Act of 1896.

MR. OLDHAM: Then the Committee should have been shown how much money had been expended on the permanent dock as distinguished from the temporary slip. The Director of Public Works admitted that the latter was a temporary work.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member evidently wanted some water at Subiaco.

MR. OLDHAM: Undoubtedly; and it would have paid the country better to have expended £14,000 in water at Subiaco rather than upon this work, which so far was absolutely useless for the purpose intended. The members for Fremantle would have been failing in their duty had they not pointed out that the money expended up to date had not been usefully expended. He must take exception also to the remarks of the member

for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans). The hon. member intended to convey that any hon. member who had received an expenditure of public money in the district he represented was bound in duty not to cavil at any item on the Estimates, but to loyally support the Government. This appeared to be advocating the policy of "spoils to the victors." The country would not stand that; at any rate, the constituents represented by the advanced portion of the community would not stand it.

MR. A. FORREST: What portion was that?

MR. OLDHAM: Not the portion represented by the hon. member. From what the member for Coolgardie had said, the reasons given showed why that member went to sit on the Government side of the House. It was well known to shipping people at Fremantle that the slip which had been constructed would not serve the purpose for which it had been built. It was altogether defective in construction; or, if not, why had it not been used before now? The Director of Works should take the Committee into his confidence and say that the slip required some alterations before it could be used. If the Director would say that within three months the slip would be put in a condition so that it could take up an intercolonial steamer, instead of vessels being sent to the eastern colonies to be repaired, then he would serve the best interests of Fremantle.

MR. DOHERTY: This criticism in reference to the item of £7,000 was unfriendly. If this money had to be expended in the constituencies represented by some hon. members who had spoken, they would not have made any complaint. He was informed by one of the engineers who had been employed on the work that the slip would give a great deal of satisfaction. Whether it would give satisfaction or not remained to be seen, and in a few months time this would be proved. If the Government had made a mistake, then after that had been found out would be time to criticise the Government about it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When the £7,000 had been expended, did the Director of Works anticipate that the slip would be in a condition to accommodate large vessels such as one of the Government dredges?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS said he had no hesitation in saying it would. There was no report before the Committee that the slip was imperfect. He had endeavoured to show the Committee that the slip was in good order, and suitable for the purpose for which it had been constructed.

Item passed.

Item, Bunbury Breakwater, completion of, £30,000:

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Would this amount complete the Bunbury breakwater?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: It would not complete the breakwater, but it would complete the work beyond the length it was at first intended to take it. The Government had done more work for the money than was expected would result from the vote previously authorised.

Item passed.

Item, Carnarvon jetty, £15,000:

MR. A. FORREST: Was it contemplated to repair the old wharf at Carnarvon? Would it not be better to devote the money, with a further sum added, to connect the jetty with the town of Carnarvon? The present Carnarvon jetty was completely rotten. It was built only to carry piles, and the old structure was not suitable for shipping purposes. It would cost £4,000 to repair. If the new jetty was connected with the town of Carnarvon, it would satisfy the people of the district.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: The Government had no intention of repairing the old jetty. The new jetty had been sufficiently completed to enable shipping to take in stock, as was evidenced by the recent shipment of 4,600 sheep in the course of a few hours, at Carnarvon. When a deputation waited on the Government some time ago regarding this matter, it was then definitely stated that the jetty was constructed for the purpose of shipping stock, and this appeared to be agreeable to the deputation. The desire was expressed that the new jetty should be connected with the town. A survey and an estimate were made, and it was found the cost would be £6,000. The Government were not now prepared to carry out this work of connecting the jetty with the town. The matter had been taken into consideration, and the

work would be dealt with next year if the finances allowed. The Government wanted to carry this work out, and the amount was at first placed on the Estimates; but it was found that the Government could not afford to expend the money.

MR. A. FORREST: If a good road were made, that might suit for the present. Steamers took in stock from the jetty, and then had to move a mile out to take in cargo.

THE PREMIER: Could not wool be shipped from the jetty?

MR. A. FORREST: It had to be lightered. If some money were spent on the road, that might meet the wishes of the people for the time being.

Item passed.

Item, Dredges and barges, £65,000:

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked where these dredges and barges were intended to work?

THE PREMIER: They were for Fremantle.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: There were two barges, and eight hopper barges, under contract to be completed within a year, and the dredges were for the purpose of completing the harbour works at Fremantle.

MR. LEAKE: Were the dredges capable of rubble work?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Yes.

MR. LEAKE: Could the Director give any idea of the cost of the work at South Perth, how much over £1 per yard?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: The cost was 2s. per yard.

MR. HOLMES: About twelve months ago the Engineer-in-Chief was floating about in London, boasting that he had the disposal of orders to the extent of one million pounds for Western Australia. He cabled to the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. McDonald, "If I purchase two dredges, can you complete the second section of the Fremantle harbour works by a certain date?" To that he received a reply, "I can complete the section with the dredges I have." But by the time the reply cable reached London, the dredges had been purchased.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: That was untrue.

THE PREMIER: The dredges were not ordered until months and months after.

MR. HOLMES said he was giving the facts as he got them.

MR. CONNOR: From whom did the hon. member get the "facts?"

MR. HOLMES: From a gentleman who was in London at the time.

MR. CONNOR: Was the hon. member in order in making statements of the kind, without verifying them?

THE CHAIRMAN: It rested with the hon. member himself.

MR. HOLMES: The services of the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief had been dispensed with, and £800 a year thus saved; but the country had been committed to an expenditure of £65,000 for dredges which could be done without. Some explanation ought to be given.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Telegrams did pass between the two officers named. This matter as to the dredges was settled during the Premier's visit to London, and the Engineer-in-Chief did not purchase the dredges without consulting the Premier. Indeed, the dredges were not ordered until after the Premier came back to this colony.

MR. HOLMES: Did the Engineer-in-Chief consult the officer in charge?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: He did in regard to two other dredges. Four dredges were ordered, two of which, when the telegram was sent, were discovered not to be required, and the orders were not completed. Two dredges were suggested and not ordered, but two other dredges were ordered.

THE PREMIER: The member for East Fremantle seemed to have got hold of a cock-and-bull story, and it was as well some light should be thrown on it. While he (the Premier) was in London, he authorised the purchase of two dredges and barges, leaving the Agent General to order them at a cost of £65,000. By some misunderstanding between the Agent General and the engineering agents, Messrs. Coombe and Son, the order was not executed; and after his (the Premier's) return to the colony, a cable came out asking whether the order should be given. Then for the first time the Engineer-in-Chief and himself found that the order, which they thought to be in hand, had not been executed, and that was several months after the purchase of the dredges and barges had been au-

thorised. But for that delay, the dredges would have been here now. As to the million pounds of orders which the member for East Fremantle referred to, he (the Premier) had none to give to anybody while he was in London.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Water supply and sewerage in towns £29,000:

Sewerage for Perth and Fremantle, £12,000:

MR. OLDHAM asked whether this was the balance of the money due to the City Council in respect to the sewerage?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: This was the balance of £10,000 due to the city. The city had had £7,000 and £3,000; and £2,000 was required for pumping.

MR. OLDHAM: That left a balance of £500.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; not at all. There were £10,000 due to the city, and £2,000 for the pumping.

MR. OLDHAM: Was it contemplated from this fund doing anything for the suburbs?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No; the money was all allocated in Perth.

THE PREMIER: The board would attend to the suburbs, with the £50,000.

MR. OLDHAM: Then it was intended to do something for the suburbs?

THE PREMIER: It was to be hoped so. He would use his influence in that direction.

MR. MORAN said he was pleased to hear the Premier make that promise. One of the best ways to get population was to attend to the water supply of the towns, especially Perth and its leading suburb of Subiaco.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and vote passed.

Coolgardie Water Supply, £250,000: Item, main pipes (including valves, etc.) at Fremantle, £80,000:

MR. MORAN: Was the wording of this item not rather misleading?

THE PREMIER: It was the wording of the statute, and could not be altered.

Item passed.

Item, Reservoirs, £80,000:

MR. MORAN: Where would these reservoirs be?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Mainly in connection with the main reservoir.

MR. MORAN: Then nothing had been done as to a receiving reservoir at the other end?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Not yet.

MR. MORAN: Had the Mount Burges scheme been abandoned? People interested would like to see the matter settled as quickly as possible.

THE PREMIER: That matter had not been settled yet.

MR. MORAN: People were also anxious to know whether Kalgoorlie would get an equal water supply with Coolgardie. Kanowna in time might not require as much water as at present, but Kalgoorlie would want a permanent and much larger supply. It was well that nothing had been decided definitely as to the receiving reservoir at the other end, because there the conditions were somewhat shifting.

MR. OLDHAM: Relative to the construction of the weir at Mundaring, he understood it was intended to construct the face of the weir in masonry.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: In properly squared blocks.

MR. OLDHAM: Unless a suitable stone for the work was obtained, it would cost an enormous amount of money. So far as he had seen, the granite was not a bit suitable for this class of work. He was told there was a stone obtainable.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Yea. Stone could be got at Kellerberin or at Parker's Road.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Development of goldfields and mineral resources. £119,246 1s. 9d.:

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: In conformity with the statute, it was necessary to make a slight alteration in this item; but this would not interfere with the totals. He moved, as an amendment, that the figures "£40,249 12s. 5d." opposite "eastern goldfields" be struck out, and "£18,000" inserted in lieu thereof. The total amount had been put in; but there were other districts which should also be provided for, so that if the Government put the whole amount on the eastern goldfields, some difficulty would be experienced in dealing with other districts.

He would move to insert "other districts, £22,249 12s. 5d." later on.

MR. MORAN: Would the whole of the £18,000 be spent on the eastern gold-fields?

THE PREMIER: There would be a balance of £22,249 12s. 5d. available under the heading "other districts." The £18,000 was a new allocation under the reappropriation, to make up the £40,249 12s. 5d.

Amendment put and passed, and consequential amendments agreed to.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Roads and bridges, £8,000:

MR. LYALL HALL: Did the amount include provision for the widening of Beaufort street railway bridge (Perth)?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: It did not.

MR. OLDHAM: What did the £8,000 provide for?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: It had reference to the carrying out of northern stock routes.

MR. HALL: When the Estimates with regard to railways were under discussion, the Director of Works said there was no provision made for the widening of Beaufort street bridge, Perth. He (Mr. Hall) concluded, on seeing the item for £8,000, that it was intended to widen the bridge in question, whereas it now appeared there was nothing on the Estimates for that purpose. The matter was a pressing one, the bridge being extremely narrow and dangerous; and if it was not widened on the western side, a serious accident might happen. The Perth council considered this matter, and it was unanimously decided that the bridge should be widened on the western side. He trusted the Minister would give early attention to the subject, with a view of carrying out the wishes of the representatives of Perth in this House, and also the representatives in the City Council.

MR. OLDHAM: This bridge was not at all suited to the requirements of the continuous traffic in that portion of the city. The amount of traffic over the bridge was considerable, and the bridge was extremely dangerous. He rather fancied that, instead of widening the bridge on the western side, it was more desirable to construct a skew bridge which would carry the traffic direct from

Barrack street, to Beaufort street. With a bit of engineering, that difficulty could be surmounted, and a skew bridge would suit all the requirements of traffic in that direction.

MR. QUINLAN: The Minister would not, he hoped, take any notice at all of what the City Council recommended in this matter. The Minister would do better to be guided by his officers. Anyone well acquainted with the city would be of opinion that, when the bridge was widened, it should be widened on the eastern side.

MR. HALL: The observations of the last speaker were surprising. The hon. member was not always in accord with the City Council, and apparently congratulated himself on not being one of "the gang;" but any stranger viewing that bridge would at once come to the conclusion that it should be widened, and widened by means of a "skew" construction on the western side. Before long, a serious accident would undoubtedly happen there; and, if the work were not done, the Government would ultimately have to buy up land immediately facing the bridge, where Dr. McWilliams's house now stood. The Government always had to pay an exorbitant price for land.

THE PREMIER: Why could not the City Council pay for it?

MR. HALL: The council would not do it. The Government would have to buy the land to prevent a serious accident. There was a very sharp turn beyond the crossing.

THE PREMIER: The council would put it right.

MR. HALL: No; the Government must put it right. It was not clear why the bridge was ever placed in such a position. Whoever was responsible had been short-sighted.

THE PREMIER: It was the direct route to Barrack-street.

MR. HIGHAM: Why had not provision been made for a permanent bridge between Fremantle and North Fremantle, to take the place of the bridge of sticks which now existed? The temporary bridge gave no special accommodation for foot passengers, and was barely sufficient for vehicular traffic.

THE PREMIER: There was also the big bridge.

MR. HIGHAM: What provision would be made for a permanent bridge?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: No arrangements for the new bridge had been made, as the present structure should serve the requirements of the locality for some time to come.

MR. OLDHAM: Surely that was not the final answer of the Minister.

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: There was no prospect of carrying out that work during this financial year. Designs were in course of preparation, and the question of how the bridge would be erected would be considered when the designs were complete.

MR. OLDHAM: That was very good with regard to the Fremantle Bridge; but in matters affecting the traffic of Perth, the members of the City Council had a right to be considered, as they had a knowledge of local requirements.

THE PREMIER: Why did they not find the money? The traffic was not yet congested on the Beaufort-street Bridge, so far as he had observed.

MR. WILSON said he had been jammed up there.

THE PREMIER: The bridge would serve very well for some considerable time. The hon. member (Mr. Oldham) abused the Government for spending money, and then asked them to spend more.

MR. OLDHAM: This was a question affecting the lives and limbs of the travelling public. The opinion of the City Council on this question was unanimous, barring one member.

MR. MORAN: "Two to one, bar one."

MR. OLDHAM: They agreed that the bridge should be constructed so as to deliver the traffic direct from Beaufort-street into Barrack-street. Surely it required no knowledge of engineering to perceive that such was the proper route.

MR. HALL endorsed the remarks just made. As this matter affected the traffic of the city, the City Council should be consulted thereon; and the design, when completed, should be submitted to the council for approval, if only as a matter of courtesy to that body.

MR. MORAN: Was it suggested that this proposed work should be in the nature of a loan to the City Council?

MR. OLDHAM: No; it was suggested that it should be done by the Government.

MR. WILSON: And done in order to complete their Perth railway station approaches.

MR. DOHERTY: Let the City council do it out of their new loan.

MR. MORAN: If Parliament had to find the money, let Parliament decide where the approach was to be built.

MR. OLDHAM: The requirements of the people who would use the bridge must be considered.

Vote put and passed.

Development of Agriculture, £5,000:

MR. WILSON: Where was this sum to be expended?

THE DIRECTOR OF WORKS: Some drainage works in the southern districts would have to be constructed, under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and would be paid for out of this vote.

Put and passed.

Immigration, £2,000:

MR. QUINLAN: This vote should be abolished entirely. Members who said "no" were not seized of the nature of the expenditure in question. He knew of a girl who recently came to the country at the expense of the Government, not to stay here, but with the intention of soon joining her friends in an eastern colony. This was only one instance out of many. Moreover, plenty of desirable servants, both male and female, could be procured from the other colonies, without any expense whatever.

THE PREMIER: The Government did not intend at the present time to import any more girls from England. A system of nominated immigration had for some time been in force to a limited extent, and some slight expense had been incurred in respect of it; but he did not anticipate that much of this vote would be expended during the financial year. It had been placed on the Estimates some time ago.

MR. LYALL HALL: Was it intended to apportion any part of the vote in order to assist men in this colony to bring over their wives and families from the eastern colonies?

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No.

MR. HALL: That should be done.

MR. MORAN: What guarantee was there that they would bring their own wives, and not other people's?

MR. HALL: The hon. member should not judge other men's corn by his own bushel. Many working men in the colony would be only too happy to take advantage of such a provision.

THE PREMIER: They ought to be able to do it without such assistance.

MR. HALL: No; a man getting from £3 to £4 per week could not afford to pay the fares of his wife and family, after keeping himself here and sending money away for their support. Some system of helping such men should be adopted, not by paying absolutely for the passage of their relatives, but by way of loans repayable by weekly instalments. This scheme would put a stop to the remittance of large sums of money to the other colonies.

MR. OLDHAM: It was to be hoped the Government would consider this subject more seriously than hon. members were generally doing.

THE PREMIER: Would not 30s. bring one passenger to Fremantle from Melbourne, Sydney, or Adelaide?

MR. OLDHAM: Men who were sending their wages to the other colonies, for the support of their wives and families, ought to be encouraged to bring their relatives here.

MR. MORAN: There would then be some solidity about the Opposition.

MR. OLDHAM: If any man desired to bring his wife and family here—

MR. MONAGH: He could do so.

MR. OLDHAM: The hon. member had never been in the position occupied by some of the working men of this colony. He knew of hundreds of men who, so far as earning in this colony was concerned, had never been able to afford sufficient to bring their wives and families over here. If the Government could induce people to bring their wives and families to this country, it would be better for the colony financially, and in every other way. In the budget speech the Premier endeavoured to make out that the country was wealthy in its male population; but he (Mr. Oldham) affirmed that the country was poverty-stricken in its male population. He would give an instance to show that men were unable to bring their wives

and families to this country. He knew a man who had been working in this colony for three years, his average wages amounting to £2 15s. per week; and it cost that man £1 a week to live, while he religiously sent £1 15s. per week to his wife and family in the eastern colonies, and the £1 15s. only kept his family very frugally. This man had not been able to save sufficient money to send for his wife and seven children.

MR. A. FORREST: Send the man to him (Mr. Forrest), and he would give him the passage money, if it was only to stop the hon. member talking.

MR. OLDHAM said he would accept the offer of the hon. member. This £2,000 for immigration should be set apart for the purpose of enabling men to bring their wives and families from the eastern colonies.

THE PREMIER: The Government had always been willing to assist men to bring their families over here, if the men would only enter into a bond to repay the money.

MR. OLDHAM: That was certainly news to him (Mr. Oldham).

MR. WILSON: Why did not the Government let the people know this?

THE PREMIER: The men would not give the bond. They wanted the money as a gift.

MR. OLDHAM: This £2,000 was required for the purpose of bringing over here the wives and families of men who were working in this colony, and who could not afford to bring their families but were desirous of doing so. If this £2,000 were expended in this direction it would be more beneficial to the colony than expending the money in bringing servant girls from England. It was no generally known that the Government were willing to assist men to bring their families here.

MR. LYALL HALL said he could give an instance of a man who came to him (Mr. Hall) a short time ago, and wanted to know whether the Government would assist him to bring his children from New South Wales. He (Mr. Hall) said the Premier, who promised that he would assist by granting free passages for this man to bring his family here. The Premier referred him (Mr. Hall) to the Under-Secretary, who flatly refused to carry

out the instruction, saying it was not the practice of the department. He (Mr. Hall) saw the Premier again, and the Premier gave definite instructions, with the result that the man was told to inquire what the passage money would be. This man's wife was dead, but he had five children, and the lowest amount which the shipping companies would take to bring the five children was £17. It would take this man some time to earn the £17, and in the meantime the man was sending money to keep his family in another colony. At last the Government gave the man power to get tickets to bring his children here, on condition, and a proper condition, that the man should get somebody to sign a bond that, in the event of his not repaying, the money would be assured to the Government. As the man could not get anyone to sign the bond, he (Mr. Hall) signed it for him. As it had been the practice for a long time to import girls from Great Britain, the least we could do was to assist the workers of this colony to bring their wives and families from other colonies. If the Government granted the passage money, and a bond was signed agreeing to pay the money by instalments, that would meet the circumstances of the case. We now had the assurance of the Premier, if an application were made, this was done. A man had only to apply to the Government, sign a bond that he would repay the money, and passages would be granted to him.

Vote put and passed.

Miscellaneous (including charges and expenses of raising loans), £100,000—agreed to.

The loan Estimates having been completed, the resolutions passed in Committee were reported, and the report was adopted.

BANKRUPTCY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CLERICAL ERROR.

A message was received from the Legislative Council, intimating that in the Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill, an apparent clerical error had been discovered, clause 55 having been struck out, instead of clause 51, as determined by the Legislative Assembly and recorded in their Votes and Proceedings.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that a reply be sent to the Legislative Council, assuring them the intention was to strike out clause 51, and asking their concurrence in the amendment.

Put and passed, and a message accordingly transmitted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

Resolutions passed in Committee of Supply, granting supplies amounting to £1,528,082 15s. 8d., in addition to £750,000 already appropriated by supply Bills, were reported, and the report was adopted.

IN COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.

A resolution was passed, giving effect to the votes of supply already agreed to, by granting the required amount out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle) in moving the second reading, said: This Bill comes from the other House, and its object is to amend the Marriage Act of 1894 in such a way as to put members of the Jewish faith on as nearly as possible the same footing as other colonists under this law. Members will notice that the Bill concerns only one denomination. There are certain sections of the Marriage Act which Jews desire to come under, and there are others in relation to which the Jews desire to remain as at present. Jews and Quakers do not come under the operation of the Act; but, as I have said, the latter denomination wish to come under its provisions as far as possible without interfering with their religious faith.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and *passed*.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until 7.30 p.m. to-morrow.

Put and passed.

PROROGATION ARRANGEMENTS.

THE PREMIER: I should like to say, for the information of hon. members, that if the state of public business permits it, we may be able to prorogue some time on Thursday. We shall have all the evening to-morrow.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You say from 7.30.

THE PREMIER: The Government have very little business to-morrow, and I think a good many of these motions should not take much time; and I suppose, as regards the most important of them, that of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), it is not his intention to proceed with that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh, yes, it is.

THE PREMIER: It will take a month. I certainly will take it as a vote of want of confidence in the Government, if carried. It is the most unconstitutional motion, from a member of the Opposition, I ever heard of.

The House adjourned at 11.13 p.m. until 7.30 p.m. the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 26th October, 1898.

Question: Public Works, Purchase of Materials

—Question: Auditor General's Report—

Motion: Paris Exhibition, Representation of Colony—Motion: Auditor General's Report on Purchase of Materials—Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill, clerical error—Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill, Legislative Assembly's Amendment—Appropriation Bill, first and second reading; Division in Committee—Metropolitan Waterworks Bill, No. 2, second reading; Division on Amendment; progress arrested—Companies Act Amendment Bill, Legislative Assembly's Amendments—Appropriation Bill, Legislative Council's Suggestion further considered; third reading—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 7.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION: PUBLIC WORKS, PURCHASE OF MATERIALS.

HON. H. G. PARSONS asked the Colonial Secretary if it is a fact that the Auditor General has condemned the repeated action of the Public Works Department in buying materials at higher prices than those contracted for.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell) replied that it was quite true that the Auditor General's duty had compelled him on divers occasions to draw attention to this important matter.

QUESTION: AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

HON. H. G. PARSONS asked the Colonial Secretary, if the Government will lay the Report of the Auditor General to 30th June, 1898, upon the table of the House before the Estimates are submitted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell) replied: I will read the following answer from the Auditor General:

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary,—As you are doubtless aware, it is my duty to transmit to Parliament (not the Government) the statutory report asked for (vide clause 40 of the 54th Vict., No. 12); but unfortunately my experience has taught me that it is beyond the bounds of possibility to carry out the requirements of the Act, owing to the volume of work to be accomplished, unless the requisite time be