

who had never done any business of this kind against a man who had had five years' experience. He was not quite prepared to go so far as hon. members in relation to the other amendments. If hon. members thought fit to insist on the amendments, they must do so and take the consequences if the Bill was thrown out.

Question--that the Council insist on its amendments--put and passed.

Resolution reported, report adopted, and a Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion of the MINISTER OF MINES, it was agreed that the House, at its rising, do adjourn till the Monday following, at 7:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m. until the next Monday evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 16th December, 1897.

Message (Appropriation): Loan Estimates--Question: Contract Work at Causeway Camp, Port Hedland--Question: Procuring Water for Stock Route, Mullewa to Minginew--Question: Railway Excursion Trains on Christmas Day--Motion: Expediting Bills and Suspension of Standing Orders--Motion: Amendment of Electoral Act--Motion: Site for New Houses of Parliament--Companies Act Amendment Bill: first reading--Motion: Trial Railway Survey, Busselton to Lower Blackwood--Motion: Proposed Railway, Coolgardie to Hounyvale--Early Closing Bill: Amendment on report, third reading--Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply: Public Works (General Statement)--Extra Sitting Day--Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

MESSAGE (APPROPRIATION)--LOAN ESTIMATES.

A Message from the Governor was received and read, recommending an appropriation from General Loan Fund to the services of the year 1897-8.

QUESTION--CONTRACT WORK AT CAUSEWAY CAMP, PORT HEDLAND.

MR ILLINGWORTH, for Mr. Vosper, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works: 1. What was the nature of the contract, if any, entered into by the Government for the construction of works at Causeway camp? 2. Whether it was true that the 48 men employed in these works had received no wages for the last 13 weeks? 3. If so, whether it was the intention of the Government to take any steps to secure their immediate payment?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—1. I assume that the hon. member refers to Port Hedland. The Government entered into a contract for the construction of a metalled roadway embankment over a boggy marsh about four or five miles from Port Hedland. 2. I am informed that on 2nd November about 30 men struck work owing to the non-payment of wages, but no information is yet available as to the date of their last payment. I may mention, however, that the Government, on becoming aware of their pressing needs, supplied the men with money to obtain food. 3. The Government have under consideration the question of transferring the contract to other persons, who have expressed their willingness to take up the work, and the best possible arrangements will be made to protect the interests of the men.

QUESTION -- PROCURING WATER FOR STOCK ROUTE, MULLEWA TO MINGINEW.

MR. PHILLIPS, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works: 1. Whether any steps had been taken to procure water on the stock route between Mullewa and Minginew? 2. Whether he was aware that there was a spau of 60 miles almost waterless, and that fat stock were suffering most severely in consequence, therefore raising the price of meat in the larger towns?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied :

1. Yes. Boring and well-sinking parties have been occupied for some time past in obtaining a water supply on this route.

2. I am not aware that there is an almost waterless stage betwixt Mullewa and Minginew, in fact I am advised that there is water fit for stock four miles south of Mullewa, and a fairly good supply of fresh water about 18 miles and 26 miles from Minginew, and that boring and well-sinking are still proceeding.

QUESTION—RAILWAY EXCURSION TRAINS ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

MR. WALLACE, by leave and without notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways whether it was the intention of the department to run excursion trains on Christmas Day.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied : It is not customary to run excursion trains on Christmas Day, which is observed in a similar manner to Sunday on the railways, and I can see no reason for departing from that custom. The arrangements will, I think, be as usual.

MOTION—EXPEDITING BILLS AND SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved :

That in order to expedite business, the Standing Orders relating to the passing of Public Bills and the consideration of Messages from the Legislative Council be suspended during the remainder of the session.

He said it was usual, when approaching the end of the session, to make a motion of this sort. Last year it was done earlier than on the present occasion. He had consulted the leader of the Opposition in regard to the conduct of public business, with the result that they hoped to be able to finish the business in time to permit of His Excellency proroguing Parliament about mid-day on Thursday next, 23rd December. It would facilitate business considerably to deal with the Bills on the Notice Paper more expeditiously than could be done under the ordinary Standing Orders. It must be remembered that it would not do to take for granted that the Legislative Council would require no time to discuss those

measures ; and it would therefore be to the interest of the country to pass this motion. This would not interfere, to any great extent, with the privileges of hon. members, because any controversial question which arose could be dealt with in committee. After a Bill had been passed through committee, its other stages were generally formal, though they were sometimes taken advantage of for further discussion ; but hon. members would have ample opportunity of dealing in committee with Bills. Any notice now on the paper of a very controversial character would, he was afraid, have to go by the board, for want of time. The Government would be satisfied if they could complete the financial Bills and one or two others. The rest must take their chance, though there were some which it was desirable to pass. There was a Bill to be introduced on Monday next with regard to mining on private property, which would be dealt with if possible ; but if there was any great objection that Bill would have to give way ; though he thought it was improbable the Bill would meet with much opposition, as it followed the lines of an Act which had worked satisfactorily in South Australia for the last ten years. At any rate, it seemed to be a matter which would not give rise to any great controversy. He was afraid some of the notices on the paper would have to remain over for a time. No great harm, however, would be done, because Parliament would meet early in June next. Only five or six months would elapse before hon. members would again be in session with ample time to devote attention to those matters without being inconvenienced by the excessive heat of this period of the year.

MR. LEAKE said he would like it to be understood that all the notices of motion then on the paper would be disposed of. If that were so, he would do what he could in getting the Estimates and other necessary work through.

MOTION—AMENDMENT OF ELECTORAL ACT.

MR. SIMPSON, in accordance with notice, moved :—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable to amend the Electoral Act, with the

object of further securing the purity of elections.

He said: I do not wish to trespass on the time of the House, but I would point out that, according to public rumour, some very large expenses were incurred by candidates during the late general election. From the result of the division in this House on the motion in favour of the principle of payment of members, I should say that it is the desire that candidates for this House should be put to no more expense than is absolutely necessary. I understand that in some electorates at the last election, some thousands of pounds were spent, and I do not think any member would wish to perpetuate such a system as that. It has been suggested that legislation on this subject would be ineffective. I am disinclined to admit that argument, because I think that any action of Parliament, with the moral assistance of the people, will certainly have its due effect. This undue expenditure of money is likely to defeat the object which we all seek, namely, purity of elections. The motion will give the Ministry an opportunity of considering the question during recess. Regulations much more extreme than our own are in force in all the other colonies, and have accomplished a considerable amount of good. The necessity for protection to every man in public life and those seeking public life will have occurred to hon. members. We know that in public life there are certain forms of blackmail; and this motion is submitted with the purpose of deterring blackmailers, and giving full opportunity to the people to select men, whether rich or poor, to represent them in Parliament.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): The arguments addressed by the hon. member for Geraldton in support of the motion will, I am sure, commend themselves to every member of the House. I can assure the hon. members that during the recess I shall endeavour, with the assistance of the hon. member himself and other members of the Chamber, to devise some means by which we can render elections independent of the corroding influence that saps the public life of many decent men. I shall certainly give the hon. member every assistance.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—SITE FOR NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. SIMPSON, in accordance with motion, moved

That this House, having taken into consideration the report of the Commission appointed to select a site suitable for Parliament Houses, disagree with the report, and recommends the site occupied by the Barracks in St. George's Terrace.

He said: I am sure it will not be considered for a moment from my general attitude that I suggest the faintest disrespect to the hon. members and distinguished men in public life who furnished the report to the House with regard to the site of the future Parliament Houses of the country. It will be just as well to mention at this stage that I do not regard it as a pressing matter that we should immediately proceed with a large expenditure on this work. This House and public men generally seem to be of opinion that we could devote our resources for some considerable time much more wisely to the development of the country in the way of providing railways, roads, bridges, harbours and other works of material benefit. But this matter of the Parliament Houses is one in which I take such an extreme interest that I trust I may be excused at this early date for asking the House to consider this motion. A good many years ago I trespassed in the columns of the *West Australian*, pointing out what a magnificent site Western Australia had been endowed with in the Barracks site for a great Senate House or State House for the people of the colony. I have no wish to labour the question, because I am perfectly satisfied that any words of mine, compared with the distinct argument conveyed to each member of the Assembly every time he looks at the site, would fail to suggest to this House the charms of that situation. I have travelled over a considerable part of this colony, and I cannot imagine a more ideal site on which to erect the great citadel of the people's liberties than that noble elevation, which is beautiful whether approached by the river, by rail, or by road, and which is visible to the most unenlightened eye as beyond question intended for some great and noble public purpose. Had I the power and could let loose my imagination, I could fancy we shall some day see there

a building embodying all the traditions of our great race and the aspirations of the people of Western Australia for the future of our country. But the report of this select committee on the question recommends that the Parliament Houses of the future should be on the mosquito-haunted swamp near the river. I say that with no disrespect to those who compiled the report; but we are contracting the horizon of our great political vision, when we endeavour to place the future Houses of Parliament on what I am compelled to call a swamp. To make this site available, it would have to be won from the shallows of the river. I have gone to considerable trouble in this matter in seeking suggestions and advice from architects, who are men skilled in getting levels and selecting situations on which to place the results of their education, from practical men, such as builders and contractors, and from ordinary commercial men, busy and full of affairs. Invariably I have had the expression of opinion that there is one place to build the future Parliament Houses of Western Australia, and that is at the head of St. George's Terrace, on the site at present occupied by the old barracks. It would ill become me to force my views as to the advantages of this site on men who are older and wiser than myself; but I suggest to the House that this is a matter on which we might very easily make a mistake. If we select what seems to have been offered and suggested to us by the great Architect of the Universe—if I may use that expression in connection with this site—and decide to erect this great building which we hope will adorn our city, it will, for all time, act as an educational institute—if I may use the term—for the people. No one can approach the city without seeing this elevation. A few days ago I sailed on the river with some friends, and we endeavoured, without success, to find any point of vantage round about the city which would be better than this. I suppose no people on earth are better authorities on architecture and the selection of sites than that great body, the Roman Catholic Church. And when we remember the splendid site on which they have erected their cathedral—the best site in Perth—I do not think there is another situation in our city which

can possibly be compared to it save the one which I have suggested as the site of the people's cathedral, if I may so call it without any unkind or discourteous reference to other institutions. I suggest this site with deference to the report and opinion of those distinguished men who have given this House the result of their deliberations; for I think they perhaps lost sight of its advantages because they were too familiar with them. I commend this motion to the House with one object, that we may erect a building for the Parliament of the country at a later date which, from its very situation, will become an object-lesson to the people of Western Australia, not only for one generation, but for all time. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Hon. members are of course aware that it is not proposed at the present time to undertake this work that we all have in view, of erecting Parliament Houses for this country; but, for all that, I think the hon. member has acted rightly in proposing this motion. It would of course be impossible for the Government to commence a work of this magnitude and importance without the consent of Parliament; and therefore, even without this motion, there would be no risk of money being spent on any site without this House being first consulted. I took steps—I think in compliance with a resolution of this House—to move His Excellency the Governor to appoint a commission to report upon the best site for the Houses of Parliament. I am not going to follow the hon. member at all in his disparagement of the site selected by a majority of that commission. To do so would be to take up a position which I do not intend to take up, and which would not be in accord with my own feelings and judgment. I am not disposed for a moment to say that the site selected is not a beautiful spot. I am not prepared to agree with the hon. member that it is a swamp. There is no swamp there. It has an elevation of some 50 feet above the river; and is, I think, one of the beauty spots in the city of Perth. I am sure no one can say that the small Government Garden, as it is called, is a swamp, or that Government House is situated in a swamp. No one

can say that the beautiful garden around Government House is anything but one of the chief ornaments of this city. But, at the same time, I am not in accord with the recommendation of the commission, because I think there is a better site, the site suggested by the hon. member, on that large reserve of some 12 or 15 acres—I do not know the exact area, but it must be about that size—at the top of St. George's Terrace, which is, I think, above all other sites, the best for the Parliament Houses of this country. The objection I have to the site proposed by the commission is not that it is not beautiful, not because there is not a magnificent view from it, but because it is not in an elevated position like the site of the old barracks; and I think that, when we are constructing new Houses of Parliament, we should try to place them in a conspicuously elevated position, where they can be seen from all parts of the surrounding country. I have always had the idea—though I have no wish to rush into any great expenditure in the matter of these buildings—that we ought, as far as possible, to make the Parliament Houses of the country classic ground. I believe that, however much of a blatant agitator a man may be outside, the fact of his being elected by the people, and coming into a beautiful House with magnificent surroundings, will tend to elevate him, and to make him feel that he occupies a high and responsible position, which perhaps he would not feel if he entered a place of an opposite character. For this reason, I hope to see by-and-by Parliament Houses worthy of the colony erected on that site. Moreover, the position proposed by this motion is not only an elevated but a very healthy position—I may say, even more healthy than any other part of the city, being higher up and further away from any objectionable surroundings. I look upon it as a great and noble site for the Parliament Houses of the future; and if I had been a member of that commission, I would certainly have strongly advocated that site, for I know of no other which in any way compares with it. It may not be a very cheap site to build upon; but that consideration, while it has to be borne in mind, must not receive undue attention. I have much pleasure in supporting the

motion of the hon. member, because it is exactly in accord with the views I have held for a long time, and which, if I had been a member of the commission, I would have advocated.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): It is unnecessary, after the statement of the Premier, that there be any lengthy debate on this motion. I have a very strong feeling on the question, and desire to express it. I may say that I am fully alive to the many advantages that will be found in the site suggested by the majority of the commission, and those advantages ought to be fully considered. But there is one disadvantage connected with it which is of a public character, which I feel outweighs all the advantages that can be suggested. It would deprive the people of the use of the only public gardens we have in the centre of the city; for they would inevitably become Parliament House gardens. Now I think we cannot too carefully guard our public reserves and health resorts, and this one especially, which is in the very centre of the city, ought not to be encroached upon in the slightest degree. On the contrary, I hope to see the time when that garden shall be extended over the site of the old Supreme Court and to the banks of the river. In the next place, this site cannot for a moment compare with the site which has been suggested by the hon. member who moved the motion; indeed, when I came to this country over seven years ago, the very first thing that struck me was that this was the place where the Parliament Houses ought to be; and I have never changed my opinion. Again, I think that Parliament Houses ought to be away from the bustle of the city. That is an important thing for a deliberative assembly. Then I want to suggest another thing: we hope that, as a result of the motion carried here a short time ago in favour of payment of members, we shall have our Parliament Houses occupied by members who come from the country districts, and to whom those Houses will be, to a great extent, their home. Those of us who live in the city attend to our Parliamentary business and then return to our homes; but those who come from a distance, as some hon. members do now, have to spend three months of the year in the city, and should find in Parlia-

ment Houses a resort at which they could not only attend to their parliamentary business, but find a reasonable amount of pleasure as well. It is impossible to erect Houses suitable for these purposes on the site suggested by the commission, or to lay out the grounds in a suitable manner, unless we were absolutely to take possession of the Government garden. So I think, without depreciating in the smallest degree the suggestions of the commission, and recognising the many advantages which they no doubt had in their minds, we are bound to give our adhesion to the suggestion contained in this motion. Wherever it is decided to erect the Houses, I hope we will "go slow." I hope the design will be one worthy of this country hundreds of years hence, and that we shall start slowly, building just such portions of the edifice year by year as our funds will permit. I would like to see the building settled upon and designs worked out carefully, and extended year by year. Hon. members are aware that for very many years the Melbourne Parliament House was used for the purposes of legislation before it was in any way completed; and it might be possible to provide in the early stages of the history of our building proper accommodation for our senators of another place, in order that they might leave their present inconvenient accommodation, and as time went on we might year by year add to the building from one fixed design, and ultimately be able to find accommodation there for ourselves. But the ornamentation and finish which necessarily belong to a building of this class will, I hope, be kept back for a good many years. I hope we shall have at the outset only the actual necessities and conveniences, and that the ornamentation will come in later. I should like to see the expenditure limited to a given sum—say, by way of illustration, £20,000 a year, and that in years to come we will have a building which will be a credit to the city when the city is a credit to it. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): I do not rise to oppose this motion, but I do not think there is a single member in this House who imagines we are prepared to go into the question of building Parliament Houses at the present time. Seven

of our members are going away shortly. They intend, I suppose, to build much larger Parliament Houses—whether in Melbourne, Sydney, or Adelaide has not yet been decided. We will not, as a Parliament, have the powers we now possess when that has been done. I do not think the colony is prepared to face the question of building Parliament Houses at a cost of one hundred or one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. The other evening the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James), when we were discussing the proposal of giving the City Council authority to borrow a small amount of money, would not trust that body with it, but he has no objection to our spending £150,000 on Parliament Houses. I do not think we are prepared to sanction any expenditure on this building.

MR. SIMPSON: I have not suggested any expenditure.

MR. A. FORREST: I would go thus far with the hon. member—the site is a good one; but any expenditure at the present time is out of the question. I do not see what good the resolution will do, as its only effect will be to place on record the fact that we disagree with the recommendation of the commission.

MR. WILSON (the Canning): I am entirely in accord with the motion of the hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), and I think the proposal is quite opportune, because, although we may not now be willing to spend any money in the erection of new Parliamentary buildings, yet I think this is a time to secure a suitable site, and that site is beyond question the best in the city of Perth. Out of the large number of strangers who come to this city, I can guarantee that ninety per cent. will at once say that is the site on which we should build our Houses of Parliament. It has many advantages, and, without going into details, I should like to point out that it is removed from the turmoil and the traffic in the centre of the city; while its comparative remoteness is not a disadvantage, inasmuch as we shall shortly have the tramway run right up the hill. I hope this House will pass the motion, and that the site will thereupon be earmarked by the Government for this purpose.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): I am in accord with those hon. members

who say it will be well for the Government to reserve the site on Mount Eliza, at the top of St. George's Terrace, for the future Parliament Houses; and I am in accord also with those who say it is not desirable to immediately enter into a large expenditure for the purpose of building, because I do not think we are in a position to do it at present. We are in a position to make some improvement in the accommodation of the present buildings, and hon. members of this House and the other Chamber are subjected to a great deal of inconvenience at present for want of proper accommodation. With regard to this Chamber, there is space at the rear for increasing the accommodation so as to serve all the requirements of legislative business for a number of years; and it is most desirable that the Government should, during the recess, take some steps to provide more accommodation in the direction indicated. If that is done, and I think it can be done at an expense of something under £2,000, then the question of building new Houses of Parliament may possibly stand in abeyance for some years. In the meantime, I am in accord with the motion, and hope the Government will reserve the site indicated for the future building of Parliament Houses.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): Hon. members will not be astonished if I say I intend to support this motion; for, remembering that I was a member of the commission appointed to consider the question of a site and designs for new Parliament Houses, it will have been seen that I joined with another member in signing the minority report which disagreed with the conclusion of a majority of the commission. My reasons for doing so have already been sufficiently stated. I regard this motion as something more than a formal one; and, if carried, it will be an emphatic expression of opinion on the part of this House that, whenever new Parliament Houses may be built, they shall be erected on the site indicated in the motion, and on that site alone; further, that the site so indicated shall not be appropriated to any other purpose. Already we find the Director of Public Works has put up additional buildings in connection with the old barracks; and although they are perhaps of only a temporary nature, yet

unless this House declares its intention with reference to that site, the hon. gentleman may feel justified in making use of that site for the business of his department by erecting other buildings. We do not grumble at what he has done there, but we want it to be distinctly understood that no building of a permanent or expensive nature shall be placed on that site, which we desire to be reserved for the future Parliament Houses. Another important consideration is that, having once selected a site, it will enable our architects to prepare the plans. It is better that such plans should be prepared at leisure, and it would be a matter to be determined hereafter whether or not the designs should be competitive. In my opinion, competitive designs should be called for the building of Parliament Houses; and if the designs are to be competitive, there is no reason why the Government Architect should not compete with others by sending in designs. Our object should be to secure the best possible accommodation, and to ensure beauty of design I think the question of the building of Parliament Houses cannot long be deferred, for we are hampered a great deal by lack of accommodation in connection with this Legislative Chamber, and especially does that inconvenience apply to the members of the Legislative Council. I trust that hon. members will regard this motion as a most important one, and not as one of a merely formal character. Of course, it ultimately must involve the expenditure of a large sum of money, but that we need not now discuss. I readily fall in with the suggestion of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) that the building might be put up piece-meal, from year to year. The next step after having selected our site is to select our design; and I trust that, during the recess, the Director of Public Works will find time to consider the question, and will recommend to Parliament at the next session some scheme for carrying out this work. I hope the hon. gentleman will see his way also to recommend that competitive designs shall be invited.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): As a member of the commission which was appointed to report on this matter, I do

not care to let this debate close without offering some remarks. From a national point of view, I think there cannot be two opinions with regard to the site for the future Parliament Houses, because I must say there is no better site than the elevated position on the top of St. George's Terrace, as indicated in the motion; but the question that the commission was appointed to consider was the selection of a site suitable for the present requirements of Parliament Houses in this colony; and taking into consideration the present population of the colony, and the population of Perth as the capital, the majority of the commissioners considered it would not be a wise course to enter into the question of providing a site, or selecting a design, upon such a scale as might in a few years be found altogether inadequate for the growing requirements of the colony. Consequently we had to consider the question of what would suit the probable requirements for the next ten or twelve years. Looking at the question to-day, and taking into account the site indicated in the motion, no doubt that site will be centrally situated in the future, and will be probably one of the best sites available for the purposes; but what influenced those commissioners, who reported in favour of the site on which the present Legislative Council stands, as being suitable for a building to serve the colony's requirements for some years to come, was that the site is one that would be most convenient in present circumstances, and for some years to come, and being in close proximity to the public gardens, they could be made use of to some extent by members for the purpose of recreation. The site so recommended by a majority of the commission would not take up so much of the gardens as some members of this House seem to expect; and, in fact, that site has been referred to as if the gardens were going to be divided in a manner which would be objectionable. Those who look into the plans which were before the commission will find that the piece of land to be apportioned for this purpose is very little larger than the piece occupied by the present Legislative Council buildings; and it would extend only to the footpath some 40 or 50 feet lower down towards the river. There would also be an admirable view from

the portion of the new building facing the river, and if the new Parliament Houses were erected there, they could, after having served the requirements of the Legislature for some years, be ultimately turned to some other use, especially as public offices; and when that stage of development was reached, a larger building, suitable for the growing requirements of Western Australia, could be erected at the site indicated in this motion, that site being the most favourable and the very best in the city. Having regard to the amount of money to which the commission were limited, we found that some members of that commission were not inclined to exceed the sum of £70,000, the amount first mentioned; but they afterwards found it necessary to agree to plans being drawn for an amount nearly double that which had been first contemplated. All this influenced the commission in concluding that it would be a mistake to confine ourselves to the erection of a building to cost £70,000, and to put it upon a large site such as that indicated in the motion; and therefore the majority of the commission recommended the erection of a building that would serve for a number of years upon a site which would be convenient for the time, and so that the building might be converted afterwards into public offices. These reasons prompted me to concur in recommending the site on which the present Legislative Council stands. Another reason was that this site would have provided opportunities for members to use the gardens while Parliament was in session. With regard to the other point mentioned, as to the designs, that is a question too debatable to go into to-day. There is no money at the disposal of the Government for preparing any designs or dealing with this matter during the recess: but, as suggested by the member for Albany, during next session possibly this matter may be considered, with a view to placing money on the Estimates for preparing designs. We should not rush this matter forward, but the consideration of designs should take some years, possibly; and, although I was opposed to the inviting of competitive designs when a deputation put that request before me, yet I am not going to be so dogged as to stand in the way of what may be the wish of Parliament in reference to the mode of preparing or accept-

ing designs; and when I opposed this matter before, I said I did not so oppose it that, if it came to be debated in the House, I would favour the designs of my department, but I said that I considered we had men then in the department, and have now, who are competent to prepare designs for our Parliament Houses, and who are recognised throughout Australia as architects of great ability. With regard to the improvement of the buildings now used for the Legislative Assembly, they should certainly receive some attention; and although no provision has been made on the Estimates for increasing the accommodation, which I consider is needed, yet I quite agree that something should be done to improve the conveniences at the back of the present Chamber. This might be done by putting another storey on the rooms at the back, and increasing the accommodation in a way that will not be expensive, while adding to the convenience of members. During the recess, I will have designs prepared, and will see what can be done towards improving the outer portion of these buildings, after consulting with the hon. the Speaker and others who have the control of these buildings. I hope to be able to have designs prepared, and, if the expense is not too great, we may possibly be able to carry out the work before the next session begins. As I said, there can be no two questions about the site for the new Parliament Houses; but taking into consideration the conditions of the present time, I am still of opinion we could erect on the site of the present Legislative Council Chamber a building that would be suitable for the requirements of both Houses of Parliament for some years to come, and which would not be cramped in the arrangements, and not be in a position which could be objected to.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): I happened to be on the deputation which waited upon the Director of Public Works, with some architects, and the hon. gentleman then objected to receive any plans from architects outside his department, although several architects were willing to supply plans without any charge. If any professional men are prepared to give their services free for a purpose of this kind, it is better, in the interests of the country, that we should

have many designs rather than one design.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: There was no occasion for designs then.

MR. DOHERTY: I think the occasion has arisen now; but the hon. gentleman seems almost to have turned to the opinion which was held by that deputation. I think we have in this city architects who are capable of designing a building, probably equal to those elsewhere, for the purposes of the Legislature; and we should accept the services of architects who are willing to do this without charge. I think also we should make an early beginning, by spending some money on the work next year. The noise that is carried on about this Chamber interferes with the work of legislation very seriously, and if hon. members were to vote ten or twenty thousand pounds for commencing the building—

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We have not got the foundations yet.

MR. DOHERTY: Then start the foundations, and put up such a building as will enable us to carry on our business—say a building of this size to start with, and extend it from year to year.

MR. SIMPSON (in reply): I had no idea, and I gather from the tone of the House that hon. members have no idea, of compromising the finances of the country in building new Parliament Houses; but, at the same time, we should ear-mark the site for all time. I do hope, also, that the Director of Public Works will pay grave respect to public opinion, and that he will seek for designs from all over the world for this important national work. The hon. gentleman's idea is that the result of inviting competitive designs will be that we shall get only a front elevation; but if anyone reads the history of the erection of the Houses of Parliament in England, it will be seen that designs were sought all over the world for what would be most serviceable to the requirements of the Legislature. I do not think we would be unwise if we followed the same course; and we should seek aid and inspiration from all quarters of the globe, for assisting us to put on that magnificent site a building that will secure for all time the conveniences of legislation, and at the same time stand there as one of the

great national buildings of Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

The SPEAKER suggested that it might be desirable to forward the resolution to the Legislative Council, requesting their concurrence.

MR. SIMPSON accordingly moved—
“That the resolution of this House be forwarded to the Legislative Council, and that their concurrence be desired therein.”

Question put and passed.

COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and, on the motion of MR. CONOLLY, read a first time.

MOTION—TRIAL RAILWAY SURVEY, BUSSELTON TO LOWER BLACKWOOD.

MR. LOCKE, in accordance with notice, moved :—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should consider the advisability of arranging for a trial survey between Busselton and the Lower Blackwood district.

He said: I think I represent the oldest and most neglected district in the colony, and I hope hon. members will not think I am expecting too much when I ask for a trial survey for a railway in the district referred to in the motion. This would not be an expensive line to build. The country is, comparatively speaking, level, and there are no rivers or other engineering difficulties to contend with, while the land all belongs to the Crown. In Geographie Bay we have one of the best harbours in the colony, where there is a jetty alongside which large vessels can be brought. The harbour was built by nature, and now we want a railway to open up the country. The Conservator of Forests has estimated that the timber in the colony is worth £100,000,000. Well, I think that half of that timber is in the district in which I ask that this trial survey shall be made. I do not ask the Government to pledge themselves to build a line, nor do I ask the Opposition to pledge themselves to support a line. If a trial survey is made, the Government will have some idea of the country proposed to be served; and then I propose to ask hon. members to visit the district for themselves.

A MEMBER: What is the distance covered by the proposed railway?

MR. LOCKE: About 40 miles. Hon. members may think that because the Bridgetown line, which goes through hilly country, cost a great deal of money, therefore the line which I suggest will also cost a great deal. But it is for that reason I wish hon. members to visit the district for themselves. The timber country starts about ten miles from the Vasse seaport, and extends for the whole distance of the suggested railway. There is no better timber in Western Australia; indeed, I was going to say there is no better hardwood in the world. Then the land at Lower Blackwood is second to none in the colony. I lived there part of my young days, and have had runs and stock in the district. On one occasion I saw a man occupied three days cutting a quarter of an acre of oats, and he was a hard-working man who worked all day. That is the kind of country I propose to open up. The suggested railway would open up splendid country for agriculture, viticulture, and also as I have already indicated, for timber. Some of the timber there has arrived at maturity and ought to be cut; and, if £15,000,000 worth or £20,000,000 worth were cut, we would know there was another £50,000,000 worth growing. Thus the timber of the district would be an everlasting asset for the colony. The Minister of Lands has had some surveys made in the Blackwood district lately, and his officers have recommended the opening up of one of the finest patches of ground in the colony. There are miles and miles of plains and swamps which would grow enough potatoes to supply all Western Australia, and also provide produce for export. At present all this country is useless, owing to the want of means of communication. The survey I ask for is only a matter of a few pounds, and the information obtained would be available for all time, even supposing it was decided not to build the railway. I do not ask the Government to pledge themselves to build a railway, or to adopt any particular route, but only to make a trial survey and ascertain the cheapest and best means of affording railway communication between Busselton and the Lower Blackwood district.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): The member for Sussex has asked me to second the motion. I was rather in hopes—not

knowing much of the district myself—that the hon. member would have advanced some very strong statistical reasons for the expenditure of money on this object at the present moment. The amount to be expended, if the motion were carried, may not be a large one. The survey would probably not be much more than £1,000, or £20 to £30 a mile. Still I am unable to give an opinion as to the immediate desirability or necessity for the construction of a railway between Vasse and some unknown place. It would have been interesting to the House if the hon. member could have fixed the attention of hon. members on the immediate desirability of this expenditure, knowing that, if the motion be passed and the Government undertake the survey, there is always an implied idea that the Government will support the construction of the suggested line. I have no personal knowledge of the district, nor have I gleaned from the hon. member that there is any immediate or pressing necessity for a railway. I beg formally to second the motion.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I feel somewhat in a difficult position. One of my friends and supporters, coming from the same part of the colony as I represent, and an hon. member whom I would like to assist if I could, brings forward a motion involving a considerable amount of expenditure. However pleasing it may be for the hon. member to submit his motion in the interests of his constituents, it is not equally pleasant for the Government to have to deal with the subject. The plea put forward by the hon. member, that the Government would only have to make a survey, is not a very good one. The hon. member is aware there is no money or provision for the construction of such a railway, and we have had experience of the difficulties which the Government, and even this House, have got into through agreeing to make surveys of railways and then proceeding no further. Before the Government make a survey of a line, there ought to be reasonable hope that the line is going to be constructed; otherwise people are only misled. What do the people of a district think, when they see an army of surveyors working, and maps produced showing the route, gradients and curves, and then find

Parliament touching the question no more? The people at once begin to abuse the Government and the House because the work of constructing the railway is not carried out. There is an instance before us at the present moment wherein the whole of the district, represented so well by the Minister of Lands, is in a state of uproar and agitation. The people of that district are abusing their old and tried member, and are also abusing the Government. I do not know whether they have got so far yet as abusing Parliament, but that will certainly come next. Last year the Government placed a sum on the Estimates with the full intention of carrying out a work in that district as soon as funds were available from the consolidated revenue. The survey has been made, but because on the first opportunity of our meeting here we are not prepared to carry out the work, the whole place is upside down, and the people are abusing their best friend because the work has not been gone on with. We are now asked to provide a sum of money to make a survey of a line from Busselton to the Lower Blackwood, when not one of us has made up his mind to construct that line. What would be said of us if we assented to the motion. We should be condemned by the people for having misled them. People no doubt would take up lands, they would undertake obligations for erecting machinery, because a kind of promise would have been given that the line would be constructed. I may say that I look on these motions—and we have had a great many of them this session—as subversive of Parliamentary Government. Unless the Government of the day is prepared to oppose this expenditure of money, the best thing the House can do is to take the matter out of the hands of the Government and put it in the hands of somebody else. I notice a lot of these motions, and I do not think they do any good. They are almost unheard of in any other Parliament of Australia. These proposals moved by private members have far-reaching influence, and they necessitate a large expenditure of money if carried.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Are they quite in order?

THE PREMIER: I do not know. The hon. member should know, having sat in

the Parliament of Victoria. But the hon. member never saw motions like this one there. The Government disregard them, and there the members do not bring them forward because they are disregarded. I hope the time will come in this colony when we shall do the same. It is an unpleasant position for me to be in, because one has to vote sometimes against one's friend or colleague, and altogether it is placing a responsibility on a person he is not prepared to take. For my part, the construction of a railway from Busselton to Lower Blackwood has not yet formed part of the policy of the present Government. I know the district well. There is a large amount of good timber there, but up to the present this line has not been on the programme we have placed before the country. I am not so sure that the hon. member (Mr. Locke), when addressing his constituents, advocated this line. I believe he advocated a line to Quindalup, but I do not believe he ever advocated a line from the Vasse to the Lower Blackwood. Everyone knows that at present it is not possible for the Government to carry a line like this through the House. When there is no intention on the part of the Government to undertake the work in the near future, what is the use of passing motions of this sort? First the Government have to find the money for the survey, and I think the Government would be doing wrong to the people of a district to encourage them in the belief that the Government were going to construct a railway, when there was no intention of doing so. The hon. member (Mr. Locke) did not consult me on this matter, or I would have told him the same as I am telling hon. members now. It is unpleasant for me to do so, because there are many of my old friends—friends of my youth—in his district, and they will not appreciate my making remarks of this kind; but I have a public duty to perform. I ask the hon. member in his own interests, and in the interests of his district, not to move motions of this sort until he knows that he has nearly a majority, because moving motions like this cannot do any good. I hope hon. members will express themselves in regard to this question, and that, after having done so, the hon. mem-

ber will be satisfied and withdraw his motion.

Question put and negatived.

MOTION—PROPOSED RAILWAY, COOLGARDIE TO BONNYVALE.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie), in accordance with notice, moved :—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the railway already surveyed from Coolgardie to Bonnyvale, a distance of six miles, be constructed.

He said: I am bound to say, after the remarks of the Premier, the wind has been taken out of my sails; but I have a duty to perform. To a large extent I feel there is a good deal of weight in the remarks of the right hon. gentleman, as to the introduction of motions of this kind. They occupy a good deal of time in the House; but in moving this motion I think I shall have the sympathy of this House and the Government and the right hon. gentleman. A railway line has already been surveyed from Coolgardie to Mt. Burges, which is a spot which the right hon. gentleman has frequently brought under the notice of the House, because it is the place where the great water dam for carrying out the water scheme for the Coolgardie goldfields is to be built. My reason for asking the construction of this railway is that Bonnyvale is a busy and important district at the present time. There is one mine there at the present moment turning out 2,000 ounces of gold per month, and I think the general output is calculated between 3,000 and 4,000 ounces per month. In addition to that, a lot of valuable machinery is on its way to this place, and it is expected Bonnyvale will become one of the most important producing centres on the Coolgardie goldfields. There is a considerable population in the district, and the railway would be a great convenience to the people in communicating with the capital, Coolgardie. There is another reason for this line, and it is that we all believe, in fact we are perfectly certain, that the Government will carry out that important water scheme; and as it will be absolutely necessary to construct a railway to convey the material to Mt. Burges, I do not think the Government can raise any great objection to putting down six miles of railway over a route that is already surveyed, and which will give the popula-

tion an advantage in the meantime. Mount Burges is really a place of resort for the inhabitants of Coolgardie, and apart from the convenience to the mining population that the railway to the foot of Mount Burges would be, this line would be a matter of great convenience to the public. In view of the fact that the Government has constructed a railway to the Boulder from Kalgoorlie, and I do not know that the population is much greater on the Boulder than in the district the rights of which I am now advocating, I hope the Government and the House will see their way to support me in my desire to get the construction of this short line of railway, which involves the laying of six miles of rails. The surveys have been completed, and the construction will be quite inexpensive.

MR. DOHERTY: How much per mile will it cost?

MR. MORGANS: I did not say how much, but I think it will be very cheap indeed. The right hon. gentleman said that when a survey had been made, and a railway was not constructed, people in the district were disappointed if the railway were not made. There is one very strong point in connection with this proposed line. The inhabitants of Coolgardie hoped and believed—but the Government, no doubt for good reasons, changed their minds—that the Menzies line would be constructed from Coolgardie: and had that line been constructed it would have gone through this particular spot, the rights of which I am now advocating. The Government will require a railway to Mt. Burges at no distant date, and I hope I have given sufficient good reasons to the House to claim their support on this occasion. I regret I have been obliged to trespass on the time of the House, but I feel my request is a reasonable one; and in view of the fact that the desire of the Government is to help forward the best interests of mining on the goldfields, I am quite sure the Government will extend their sympathies to me on this occasion, when advocating the claims of a large centre of population. I desire to congratulate the goldfields on one point. From what the right hon. gentleman says, there are some noisy electors in Western Australia outside the goldfields. I find, from what the right hon. gentleman said, some of the

electors round Northam, represented so well by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, are noisy. I am bound to say that I was led to believe that the only noisy electors of the colony were on the goldfields, but I am glad to find there are some others besides those on the goldfields.

MR. SIMPSON: Would it do to carry out the line by private enterprise?

MR. MORGANS: Yes, I should be glad to see private enterprise carry this work out.

MR. GEORGE (the Murray): The case cited by the hon. member is so strikingly parallel to that of my own district that, by substituting "Pinjarrah and the Williams" for "Coolgardie and Bonnyvale," I do not think I could possibly place a stronger case before the House. I had the honour to ask the Premier and his colleagues a little while ago to carry out their pledge that wherever a railway would pay they would be prepared to consider it; and I can state that, if the Government would construct the six or eight miles of railway to which I have referred, it would be an inexpensive work, it would enable a timber company to put on thirty or forty hands, and the gentleman who owns the sawmill will take care that the railway will pay, and has offered to give a cash deposit to a large amount as a guarantee that interest, sinking fund, and working cost would be provided for by the revenue resulting. The hon. member who has just spoken has not such a commercial bait to put before the Premier as this. I know that the line will pay. I have no interest in it. I merely wish to provide for the farmers in the South-Western district the best market they possibly could have, by inducing the erection of sawmills all along the line. That railway has been refused; and, so far as I can see, the railway that the hon. member for Coolgardie advocates stands a very good chance of being refused too.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I am opposed to private members trying to interfere with the financial business of the country. The member for Coolgardie should not, at the present time at any rate, have moved his motion. I believe there are a good many people living about what is called Cane Swamp and near Mount Burges, and that the mines there are turning out well. As time goes on they

will, perhaps, justify the construction of a railway; but I am not prepared to admit at the present moment that they are languishing for the want of one. There is no objection on the part of the Government to tramways being constructed about any part of the goldfields. It seems to me that the best course for the hon. member to pursue is to state the case as he has done, and to urge it upon the Government in every constitutional way. I hope before the House meets again to have an opportunity of visiting the district and seeing the locality; and, if the finances justify it, no one will be more pleased than myself to give better means of transit to so important an industry as that of the gold mines. I thoroughly understand that it is a great advantage to gold mines to be connected with a railway, especially if the ores are refractory, and have to be taken to some distance to be treated. I do not know whether the ores in the mines referred to by the member for Coolgardie are of that character. If they are, of course the case is stronger.

MR. MORGANS: 100 tons a day could be dealt with, if they had a railway.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member has made out a very good case, and one that will receive the attention of the Government, now that it is put prominently brought before them. The Government have known all along that there was a great demand for railway communication between Coolgardie and Mount Burges, and especially the Twenty-five Mile. These districts have been asking for a railway for a long while past. I am quite aware that a very important part of the goldfields would be opened up by the construction of a railway in that direction; but the demands for one have not been considered so urgently pressing as those from other parts of the fields. The trunk lines have not gone in that direction. All the Government have been able to do, so far, on the goldfields, with one or two exceptions, has been to build trunk lines, and we have not as yet been able to give a line to every centre. It could hardly be expected as yet that every centre should have a railway. Carting must be done for some time, and, especially if they have the assistance of tramways, people will be able to get along pretty well. There is no provision on the Estimates

for the construction of this line, nor is there any money available at the present moment. Before the Government could construct this railway we would have to pass a Bill—which might not take long—but we would have to provide funds, which we are unable at present to do. I assure the member for Coolgardie that I will not lose sight of what he has said. Between now and the time the House meets again the matter will be considered, and if after that the Government think it is an expense we can properly recommend, and the finances justify it, I shall be very glad to move in the direction desired. More I am unable to say.

MR. MORGANS: After the assurances of the right hon. the Premier I desire to ask permission to withdraw the motion standing in my name. I consider it is a question of vital importance, and one worthy of the Premier's best consideration; but I cannot expect that it will be dealt with immediately.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The SPEAKER left the Chair at 6:25 p.m.

The SPEAKER resumed the Chair at 7:30 p.m.

EARLY CLOSING BILL.

AMENDMENT ON REPORT.

The Bill having been reported with amendments,
Clause 18:

MR. JAMES (in charge of the Bill) moved, as an amendment, that the words "and employees," in line 6, be struck out. This was simply a formal alteration.

Put and passed.

Report, with the further amendment, adopted.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of MR. JAMES, the Bill was read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

Further consideration in Committee of Supply.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
(Director, Hon. F. H. Piesse).

GENERAL STATEMENT.

Vote—*Public Works*, £474,454 1s. 8d. :

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS said : It is not my intention to detain the House long in connection with the statement I intend making in regard to the Public Works Department; but I desire to touch upon most of the matters of importance to the House, and afterwards, when the items are under discussion, I shall probably be able to deal with any specific item, and to give any information concerning it which may be required. My reason for not dealing with this department as fully as I dealt with the railways is that many of the subjects in connection with the public works have already been dealt with by the Premier in his Financial Statement, wherein he referred to so many of the works in course of erection throughout the length and breadth of the colony. Consequently, in again alluding to these different works, I can only touch upon them in a general way, because a great deal of information has already been given concerning them, when the different items have been under consideration in this House.

Last Year's Expenditure.

I should first like to allude to the large amount of business which has been done by the Public Works Department during the past year. The gross expenditure for the year has amounted to £2,325,474, of which £1,519,995 was defrayed from loan funds, and £805,479 from consolidated revenue. This has been distributed under the various heads of departmental, railways and tramways, harbour and river improvements, telegraph lines, public buildings, water supply and sewerage in towns, water conservation and stock routes, roads and bridges, and boring for coal and miscellaneous works. Hon. members will learn from the returns laid before them in my report, that the expenditure for public works in 1896-7 has reached the highest amount which the expenditure of this department has ever attained in the colony. For the year 1893-4, the expenditure from revenue was £68,163; from loan, £683,563; or a total of £751,726. For 1894-5, it had risen to £145,287 from revenue, and £611,273 from loan, totalling £756,560. For last year, 1895-6, the amount spent out of revenue was £638,501, and from loan

£650,708, or a total of £1,289,209. For the year 1896-7, the amount expended from revenue was £805,479, and from loan £1,519,995, or a total of £2,325,474. This is doubtless a very large amount, and of course, as I mentioned just now, it has been distributed throughout the whole of the colony, and has been a necessary result of the great development which has taken place consequent upon the progress of the goldfields and upon the remarkable prosperity enjoyed by other districts of the colony. The total expenditure for last year exceeded that of 1895-6 by no less a sum than £1,036,265. The figures I will give disclose the classes of works on which this increased expenditure has been incurred, which are as follow:— On railways and tramways, the expenditure for 1896-7 was £1,136,137, being an increased expenditure over the year 1895-6 of £589,589. On harbours and river improvements, the amount expended for 1896-7 was £311,662. That is an increased expenditure over the previous year of £102,796. On public buildings, the expenditure was £410,490, or an increase over 1895-6 of £214,357. On roads and bridges there was spent £159,755, or an increase over the previous year of £78,903. I would like to point out also that the borrowed money which has been expended on the public works of the colony up to the 30th June last amounts in the aggregate to £5,543,044, which has been distributed over large works throughout the colony, of which the principal are railways and tramways, which have £3,743,830. Next come harbour and river improvements, £812,498. Then we have telegraph lines, £307,329; and you will notice that the amount expended on public buildings has only been £131,778; and I think the country is to be congratulated on this, for the reason that it shows that a very small sum, proportionately, has been expended out of loan upon public buildings. The public buildings throughout the colony, with the exception of those included in this item, have been constructed out of consolidated revenue. On stock routes and water conservation we have expended £251,853; for roads and bridges we spent £118,997; and on water supply and sewerage for towns, £16,801; and there is a miscellaneous expenditure of

£159,958, making up the total I have previously mentioned of £5,543,044. For this colony that is, of course, a large loan expenditure; but I think we may point to the fact that the expenditure upon railways, which I have mentioned as something over $3\frac{1}{4}$ millions, has proved one of the best investments that the colony could make, opening up, as it has done, a large area of country, including the gold-fields, and extending to those fields the convenience of railway traffic, which is so necessary for their development.

Fremantle Harbour Works.

Having dealt with the figures which I have mentioned as expenditure, I would now like to deal with the principal works which have been carried out during the year, or which are in course of construction; and first of all I will deal with the Fremantle Harbour Works. These, I think, are among the greatest works we are now undertaking, because they are of such interest and importance to the colony; and although very great progress was made during the year 1895-6, still more rapid progress has been made during the past year. In fact, the work has been pushed ahead with such rapidity that the harbour has been made use of some eighteen months sooner than was anticipated last year. I may say that, during the past year, in consequence of the great demand for wharfage at Fremantle, and of the increase in the number of ships which arrived at the port, it was found necessary to make some provision for accommodating shipping by expediting the unloading of the cargo from such vessels; and the Government deemed it expedient to push on with greater rapidity the works in connection with this harbour. First of all there was the deepening of the harbour, which was accelerated by the addition of the two dredges which were put to work there. The dredge Fremantle, which has come out recently, has got into working order, and there was also the dredge "Premier," previously at Albany, which has done very great service in connection with the sand in the river, and has reclaimed a large block of land which has since been utilised for the purposes of our Fremantle railway yard. I have previously placed before hon. members a map showing the progress made in connection with the

Fremantle harbour works; and it will be noticed on reference to that map that a depth of 25ft. has been dredged throughout the greater portion of the entrance, and that 20ft. has been dredged over the whole length of the quay completed to date. The whole of that structure, which is now completed, reaches the very respectable length of 3,160 feet, and in addition to this the total length piled is 1,295 feet; consequently we have had something over 4,000 feet of quay constructed or nearly completed at Fremantle. I would point out that this has been made use of by various vessels which have from time to time entered the harbour. The first occasion on which a steamship entered the harbour at Fremantle was on the 4th of May last, when the "Sultan" took up her berth alongside the quay. Since that time the harbour has been used by a number of deep-sea vessels, of which I may mention the "Cornwall," which is one of the largest carrying ships which has ever come to Western Australia. The total length of this vessel is 430 feet, with a width of 54 feet, and a depth of 32 feet, and a gross burden of 5,489 tons. This vessel, compared with some of the larger P. & O. steamers of recent construction, is of no great size; but it compares most favourably with the type of vessel which has been touching at Albany for many years past, pointing to the fact that, if the restrictions which have been placed on these vessels entering the port were removed, we should very shortly be able to accommodate vessels of the mail-boat type within the river. The expenditure in connection with the wharf up to date—I am giving these figures because they do not appear in the report placed before hon. members—is £52,658, and the cost per foot of the construction has been £10 17s. 6d. This, compared with the contract which was let for the thousand-foot wharf constructed by McDowell on the north mole, is about 12s. under that contract price. And, when we take into consideration the fact that the wharf constructed on the south quay is wider than that at the north mole, and also that it is of very much greater strength, I think it speaks favourably for the economy which has been practised by the department in connection with this great work. The total quantity of rock removed from the Fremantle harbour up

to the present time is 617,420 cubic yards; and the total quantity of sand removed is 1,340,177 cubic yards. The total expenditure for the year in connection with the Fremantle harbour works has been £210,175.

MR. SIMPSON: Is that out of loan funds?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; the whole of that is out of loan funds—not out of ordinary revenue.

MR. SIMPSON: It will be considered when the loan fund is discussed?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes, of course, it is a public work, and I shall deal with the loan items afterwards, unless you wish to have them specially dealt with. I would like also to mention that the wharf is now being made use of at Fremantle for the loading of timber vessels. These vessels are now taking in timber at the wharf in addition to the steamers. I am just mentioning these figures to show the great work that is being done. Hon. members must recognise that although a commencement was made on the 28th of August last year with this quay, we have succeeded in putting in this large amount of work, to accommodate so many vessels which are seeking the benefit of the harbour. We are constructing a slip to clean the two dredges, instead of sending them to Melbourne as we had to do before. This caused a delay of some months, in addition to the great expense entailed and the loss of time. In the construction of the dock the machinery belonging to the slip, and which cost £6,000, will be used. I have been asked the question why the Government has not commenced the construction of this dock. This cannot be done until the dredging is further completed. This year has been a record year for the construction of bridges. We have had many bridges placed on the Estimates and not completed, and they have been carried over from year to year; but by the energy displayed by the Engineer-in-Chief, all the bridges, except the bridge at Guildford, have been constructed. A temporary bridge has been erected at North Fremantle, and that will serve the purpose until a permanent bridge has been constructed. This temporary bridge had to be put up in consequence of the reports received as to the

stability of the bridge. It was pronounced by engineers to be faulty, and the Government have decided to erect a temporary bridge at North Fremantle until it is possible to construct a permanent one. With regard to the permanent structure, if hon. members turn to the report of the Public Works Department, they will find a complete statement as to what the engineer proposes should be done in connection with this bridge. The engineer's report has not yet been confirmed by the Government. It is only an estimate prepared by the engineer, showing what can be done as to the bridging of the river at North Fremantle. Provision has been made for a swing, and I think this will be found to be necessary, taking in view the fact that in time the vessels will be coming up the river, probably to Perth. It will be necessary then also to deal with the railway bridges.

Roads and Bridges.

As to roads and bridges generally, this year I introduced a Bill dealing with roads and bridges; but owing unfortunately to some misunderstanding between the Lands Department and the Works Department concerning this Bill, it has not reached that stage I hoped it would have reached. I hope next session to reintroduce the Bill with some modifications. Then I think I must have inserted in it a clause providing for the auditing of accounts. It seems to me that the present system of administration in connection with the roads and bridges is a very questionable one indeed. Since I have administered the department, I have had endless trouble with the finances of the roads boards. Already the roads boards have power under the existing Act to elect an auditor, and the resident magistrate of the district is also an auditor to act on behalf of the Government. We must remember that although there is not much fault to find with the way in which the work is done by the resident magistrate or the auditors, there is not that examination or care given in auditing these accounts that is really so necessary. What I wish to see done next year is to have an auditor appointed attached to the Public Works Department, or the Treasury—I do not care which, so long as an auditor is appointed—whose duty it shall be to audit

the accounts in conjunction with an auditor appointed by the district, or exclusively by the public auditor. Although I do not wish now to comment on the way in which the roads board funds have been expended, I must say that if greater supervision were given, and more care shown in the audit, it would have a beneficial effect on the expenditure of the roads board funds.

MR. DOHERTY: What about the appointment of a supervisor over the works?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That is not material yet. Many roads boards have carried out their work well. If we go into the question of appointing Government supervisors, and say that the roads boards shall construct their roads on certain principles, it will end in some amount of trouble. I admit that some of the money is wasted, but on the whole the work is very satisfactorily done by the boards, and it is done much cheaper than the Public Works Department is ever likely to do it. I think that these boards have such a knowledge of the local surroundings, and by their methods of calling for tenders locally, and dealing with matters in that way, they get the work done cheaper than we could get it done.

Sewerage and Water Supply.

With regard to sewerage and water supply, I mentioned a few evenings ago, just casually in speaking on the matter in another way, that a report had been made by Mr. Napier Bell on the sewerage of Perth and Fremantle. The Government has received the report, and has sent it on to the engineers for their reports upon it. Mr. Hodgson, in charge of the sewerage, has obtained some necessary information in connection with surveys, which I hoped to have had in a report in my hands by this time: but I heard from him yesterday, and he hopes to let me have his report on the Perth scheme next week. As to the report about Fremantle, we shall not be able to get that for some time. As to sewerage generally, that subject I shall not deal with. The Government have no intention of dealing with it, until we can go into the matter more fully. We have not now sufficient money to carry out the work, and as a large amount of money

will be required for the work, it will have to be provided for under Loan Act.

Boring for Water.

In regard to boring for water throughout the country, I am aware that it is hardly news to say that the Coolgardie diamond drill has reached the depth it was proposed to go, 3,000 feet, and the work has been stopped, and the whole of the plant taken down. It will remain at Coolgardie for some time, until the Government decide where to send it for future work. The Government do not intend in future putting down bores in any part of the goldfields districts, unless favourable opinions are given by geologists as to the boring. We have had a test at Coolgardie, which was made in opposition to the opinions of all geologists. It was made in accordance with the wish of Parliament and to satisfy this House. This work at Coolgardie is quite an achievement in boring to such a depth through granite without difficulty. Of course there are deeper bores, but few bores have been put down in so short a time as this has been, through granite. It was quite expected that the bore would not be able to go more than three feet a day in the granite, and I believe it was expected that it would take another year to complete the work; but I am glad to inform hon. members that we have succeeded in boring to the depth a year sooner than it was anticipated. This, of course, is a great saving to the country.

MR. SIMPSON: Who selected the site of the Coolgardie bore?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Mr. Hector, for the reason that the geologists would not point out any site. The geologists said the only way to find out a place to put down a bore was to take a camel and put a blindfolded man on its back, and where the camel stopped, there to put down the bore. That is the advice they gave, and it shows the idea they have of the probability of obtaining artesian water on the Coolgardie goldfields.

MR. SIMPSON: Did not the geologist of South Australia give some idea about subterranean water?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He did; but we knew subterranean water existed. It had been

proved by the amount obtained from these subterranean supplies. A large amount of work has also been carried out by the Water Supply Department. Wells have been sunk right away to Wyndham, with one exception right in the northern portion of the country. Those who wish now to travel through the country will be able to get through with a good supply of water. It was not an easy matter to travel through before. The stock routes have been opened up and placed under Government control. A supervisor has been given so many wells on the route to look after. It is preferable to do this rather than to put the route under roads boards. Although the roads boards have done their best, they have not looked after the work as they might have done; and the Government decided, as so much money had been expended in this direction, to place men in charge of the wells, so that at any time repairs were required these men could effect them.

Railway Construction.

With regard to railway construction throughout the country, the works in connection with the different lines are in progress. The Mullewa-Cue line has not made the progress that was expected owing to floods, which were referred to in this House the other evening, and a lot of extra work will be necessary in consequence. An arrangement has been made with the contractor by which he will run a train a day each way except Monday, and will carry all goods and passengers at a specified rate. The reason why he will not run a train both ways on Monday is because there will be no train to meet him on that day. I hope the arrangement will prove satisfactory. The people in the district would prefer that the Government should take over the line, but it would not do for both the Government and the contractor to be in possession of the line together. The contractor is under a heavy penalty to maintain the line for a further period, and the Government will take up the running in July. Everything has been satisfactorily arranged. The Collie Railway is in progress, and the Government hope to take that over at the end of February. That is 18½ miles long, and nearly the whole of the line has been ballasted. The Donny-

brook-Bridgetown railway has been constructed. The railway from Perth to the racecourse has been completed, as also the bridge across the river, and the line was used for the first time at the last meeting. It is hoped this will be a very great convenience to the people visiting the racecourse. The Bunbury racecourse line is also completed at a cost of £2,000 or £3,000. The Kalgoorlie-Boulder railway is near completion. It is hoped that this railway will give a fairly good return for the money expended.

MR. VOSPER: Better than the Bunbury racecourse?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I think so. The Menzies railway is also in progress. The rails have been laid beyond Bardoc, and will reach Menzies about April, when the Government will take up the running. The line will be a great convenience to that important district. The Kanowna railway has been put in hand, and the rails are laid for some 12 miles, and carrying goods and passengers to that town. This work is very much appreciated. The discovery of gold at Kanowna has been an incentive to the contractors to carry out the work quicker than they would have done. The Greenhills railway (York) is under construction, and will be completed about the middle of the year. The time given for the carrying out of the Kanowna railway is nine months from date of signing the contract, so that it will be in the hands of the contractors another five months, when it will be taken over by the Government. The contract time for the Menzies railway was fifteen months, and as about eleven months have expired, that will be taken over by the Government in another four months. Both these works are expected to be fully completed before the expiration of their contract dates. The survey for the Goomalling railway has been completed, but that of the Pinjarrah-Marradong has not been completed, as there has been a difficulty in finding a suitable route through the hills. Several routes have been tried and have not proved satisfactory. Recent reports show that a later trial has been more successful, and that a better route has been found, so that I hope soon to hear that that line has been commenced.

Perth Markets and Cool Storage.

The Perth markets have been opened and leased to the city council, and they have been occupied, but the rents have been so great as to be detrimental, both to the interests of the city council and all those who intended to occupy the market. I was informed that an auction was held in connection with the letting of the stalls, and I then expressed my surprise to find that the rents offered for stalls were so excessive. Knowing what these people could afford to pay, I quite expected the result that has happened. I have heard that the rents have been since reduced. The cool-storage buildings in Perth have been completed and are occupied. I am sorry to say that, up to the present, they have not been made use of so much as we anticipated by people sending produce from the country districts, but the space is being gradually taken up, and I think in time the country people will find it to their advantage to send down produce to be put in the cool-storage chambers. At present milk is the principal article sent in. This will, no doubt, become in time a great trade. The building has more than paid its way up to the present, because I have been making use of the place for storing different things, and it has been extremely serviceable. A large quantity of frozen products, for which we were paying £80 or £90 a week, have been stored there.

A MEMBER: Imported?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; principally imported. The building will, no doubt, be for some time made use of for that purpose.

MR. HUBBLE: And local people are unable to make use of it!

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We have been advertising for some weeks to let the rooms, and only yesterday the manager told me that there was a room vacant. It depends on what space you want as to whether you can be accommodated. I offered to lease the spaces and reserve six rooms for the public. Now, I find the local people want to make use of them, and complain because they cannot get what they want. It is the dog in the manger all over again.

Architectural Branch.

Last year I spoke of the work of the Architectural division. I said it was my

intention during the coming year to re-organise it. I admit that there are some very good architects in the department, but they are not all as practical as they might be. We want someone with practical ideas to keep them in order. The designs are, as a rule, too elaborate, and entail too much expense in the carrying out. Everyone wants to show himself a Sir Christopher Wren. On the whole, however, I think the men are doing their work very satisfactorily. Although Mr. Bell is an engineer, he has had considerable experience in this class of work. He has as good a reputation as any architect in Australia, and he has done very good service to this country. By the system I have adopted, we are saving. The Public Works Department is a great money-spending department, and the way to save money in this department is to have designs economically prepared. But an officer in charge of the Architectural division stood aghast when I told him to prepare some standard designs. He said he would not like to see the same designs used all over the country—he believed in change. He was in the habit of changing his designs very often, and put the country to a very considerable expense. We are lucky to have a good man in charge of the Architectural division. The men in that division have done their work very zealously during the past year. A number of designs have been prepared which were never made use of, and for which therefore I have nothing to show; but, taking the expenditure during the year, hon. members will find that the percentage of cost to the administration has been under 6 per cent., including everything connected with the preparation of designs, construction, and the working of the department.

MR. GEORGE: I thought it was 2 per cent.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We are taking things into consideration we never took before. We are also preparing designs to standard which will save the country thousands of pounds. The standard designs include school buildings, police stations, post and telegraph offices, country hospitals and other buildings of that character, and with standard specifications, estimates, quantities and drawings ready for the contractor, it will readily be seen the saving and benefit which must accrue.

Centralising the Offices.

There is little for me to add, except in regard to departmental questions generally. The centralisation of the department has been alluded to in the report of the Under Secretary. The present decentralisation of the Public Works Department is one of our greatest drawbacks. If the department could be centralised in one building, so that all the officers could be under direct control, with the advantages of inter-communication, the expenses of management could be lessened by at least 30 per cent. When the country can afford it—which I hope will be in a short time—the Government hope to be able to erect a block of buildings in the city, possibly on the land secured in St. George's Terrace, to serve not only the Public Works Department, but also the Lands Department. At present these departments are scattered throughout the city, and great difficulty is experienced in working them. Their decentralisation necessitates the repetition of record and other officers; whereas, if the work was all carried on in one building, the department could be administered much more effectively.

Coolgardie Water Scheme.

During the year the Engineer-in-Chief has visited England in connection with the Coolgardie water scheme, and the interim report prepared by the commission appointed to inquire into the scheme in England has been placed before this House, and another report will follow shortly. This matter of the Coolgardie water scheme is still receiving attention, and, when the Estimates come up, it will be found that £50,000 has been put down for the purpose of commencing the work. Immediately the Government are ready to commence with the work, I am ready with the plans for the reservoir north of Smith's Mill. It may be said that the sum put on the Estimates is not large, but there remains a good deal to be done yet in the way of inquiry. The class of pumps and piping and other necessary things have yet to be definitely settled.

MR. SIMPSON: That is what you told us twelve months ago.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The work cannot be proceeded with, or anything done in the way of ordering material, until the matter of

pumps and pipes has been settled. Immediately this is decided, the work can be proceeded with.

MR. VOSPER: Is Smith's Mill on the watershed of the dam?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The watershed reserve is one of the very best that can be obtained. There are very few residents there, and when the dam is erected it will mean the backing of water for a distance of about eight miles. That is an immense volume of water; and every protection from pollution will be given to the catchment area.

MR. SIMPSON: Have you any idea when you will really begin the work?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We have no idea. We may commence almost at once, or in a fortnight or six weeks. It is difficult for me to deal with the matter of Public Works, for the reason that so much of it has already been discussed. From time to time I have answered questions on the subject, and, in addition, the Premier has dealt with it fully in his Budget speech, when he touched on many of the public works of importance throughout the country.

Pressure of Work in the Department.

The late abnormal condition of affairs has meant a large expenditure of money throughout the country, and it has also meant that we have not had time to look after many matters in connection with administration. We have had to go ahead at a great rate, to meet the demands cast on us for public works from Wyndham in the North to Eucla in the South.

MR. VOSPER: Especially in the North.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; and also to the East, as the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie well knows. If the hon. member looks at the map, he will find it dotted all over with works done by the Water Supply Department, works which have been of great benefit in opening up the goldfields.

Officers and Salaries.

The staff of the department have had to work under enormous difficulties, but have succeeded in carrying out their duties satisfactorily. Although it may be said that the officers are paid to do their work, still,

it must be admitted, it has been a trying time for everyone of them during the past year. The whole of the staff have conducted themselves and responded in a way which is most gratifying to the Government. With a few exceptions, I am impressed with the energy displayed by most of the engineers, who have gone into their work with zest. I hope that when hon. members are dealing with the Estimates, they will remember that many of the officers of this department are only temporarily employed. Salaries may, in some instances, appear larger than some hon. members may deem advisable; but it must be remembered that if an engineer is engaged to come here at a salary of £700 a year, he is subject to a month's notice, and may be dispensed with at any time when the work is completed. These temporary people occupy an uncertain position, and the small increases which have been proposed for them should certainly be given.

GENERAL DEBATE.

MR. LEAKE said he understood it was the wish of the Government to clear the Notice Paper of some unimportant business, and he suggested that progress be reported.

THE PREMIER: The proposal of the hon. member for Albany would not assist the Government.

MR. SIMPSON: Why not resume the discussion on the "tick" question?

THE PREMIER said he was not prepared to go on with the adjourned debate on the tick question that night, because members interested were not present. He was, however, prepared to meet the convenience of hon. members, and would be glad to arrange a day when the adjourned debate could be resumed.

MR. LEAKE: The adjourned debate on the tick motion could be taken on the following day.

THE PREMIER: That could no doubt be arranged, but the other motions on the Notice Paper were not pressing. He was sure the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie would not be so unreasonable as to ask that the motions in his name should be taken that night. The Estimates should now be proceeded with, and an arrangement could be made for the motions of the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie to be dealt with

at another sitting. Hon. members had come that night prepared to discuss the Estimates.

MR. VOSPER: So far as he was personally concerned, it was a matter of indifference to him whether his motions were taken that night or at the following sitting.

MR. LEAKE said that, under the circumstances, he would waive any objection to the discussion on the Estimates being proceeded with. This he thought was the proper time for him, with a view possibly to accentuate the general discussion, to move an amendment to this vote. He moved, "That the vote be reduced by £25,000." Hon. members would perceive that this motion would not necessarily upset the Works policy of the Government, but it might necessitate the dropping out of their Estimates of a few of what might be regarded as the less necessary works. When it was considered that the Commissioner of Railways had under his control for this year over a million of money, his financial arrangements could not be upset by depriving him of £25,000; and his (Mr. Leake's) proposal was not to deprive the country of the benefit of that expenditure, but to let a most deserving branch of the public service—the Lands Department—have an opportunity of spending this money. The Lands Department, as hon. members were convinced some short time ago, had been practically starved to feed this department of railways and works, and he asked the committee to support this amendment, in order that the settlement on the land should proceed with the greatest possible despatch. The country was unfortunately threatened with an invasion of rabbits from the South Australian side, and there were other matters of importance which required the attention of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who had told the House that the Estimates had been cut down, and that he was forced to reduce his expenditure to the disadvantage of his administration. Therefore the committee would act wisely in accepting the statement of the Premier that the advancement of the lands policy of the Government was of paramount importance, and in assisting the Government to the extent of £25,000 in carrying out that policy. This proposal would not even necessitate any delay,

because the Government, backed by the expression of opinion of the committee, could take the amount from the public works estimates, and, by a supplemental vote, apportion it in such a manner as the Commissioner of Lands might suggest. The Auditor General's report, which had been presented somewhat late in the session, threw a still stronger light on the financial muddle into which the Government appeared to have got themselves; for whereas it was pointed out by the Opposition, and indeed admitted by the Government, that the vaunted cash balance of £315,362 4s. 7d. consisted chiefly of goods—

THE PREMIER: The Government said nothing about a cash balance.

MR. LEAKE: It was evident that he would have to refer to the Premier's own papers, wherein would be found the expression, "estimated revenue." Now a revenue meant money—not wheelbarrows and shovels. Then came the item, "credit balance, 30th June, 1897, £315,362 4s. 7d."

THE PREMIER: It did not say "cash balance," did it?

MR. LEAKE: But the Government had treated it as cash. It was in the receipts and expenditure, whereas, as a matter of fact, it was largely represented by railway material and other stock at Fremantle. So far from being cash, the greater part of it was railway property, which must come into use almost immediately, and which moreover represented money voted on previous occasions. If we had to realise upon that stock, what would it bring to-day? Would a contractor take payment in nails, or timber, or other material?

THE PREMIER: When drawing up a balance-sheet, it was necessary to include the assets.

MR. LEAKE: There could be no objection to the item being shown as an asset; but, although it was not in use, that fact could not alter its character. It consisted of goods, and there was no getting away from it. He had been leading up to this point.

THE PREMIER: A very stale one.

MR. LEAKE: It would never get stale in this Parliament until the Government consented to alter the system, and his object was to drive into the heads of Ministers the necessity for an alteration.

THE PREMIER: What alteration did the hon. member propose?

MR. LEAKE: The Government should show as cash what was cash, and not tenpenny nails, which could not be regarded as money. The title of the account read, "Balance-sheet of the cash transactions of Her Majesty's Government." That undoubtedly meant cash. On the credit side was found the item, "By stores on hand to be charged to departments when issued for consumption, £700,307 12s. 1d." Those were Government assets shown in the cash balance-sheet as actual cash, yet here we had the admission that they were stores. How could it be said that this was available cash for revenue purposes?

THE PREMIER: The actual cash in hand at the end of every quarter was clearly shown.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The item of stores had no business in the cash balance sheet.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was undoubtedly a great financier, while the Ministers were not.

MR. LEAKE: That was the point. The Opposition knew that Ministers were not great financiers, and therefore wished to teach them something. In the Government Storekeeper's report, page 6, that officer said:—

The balance of stock on hand on 30th June, as per Treasury statement, was £700,307 12s. 1d. In respect to the increasing balances on hand each year, I respectfully submit that they contain stores which should have been used or not imported, and with a view of assisting to prevent unnecessary importation I would wish to recommend that Store Regulation No. 3 be enforced, also that the heads of departments responsible for the indenting of stocks not drawn from store within a reasonable period be called upon to state when they are likely to use them.

So much for the stores. Not only were the stores misrepresented as cash, but the department actually imported stores that were not required, according to its own official report. And, referring once more to this item of £700,307 12s. 1d. represented by stores and shown as cash in the cash balance-sheet, it would be found, on analysing the amounts, that instead of having a real credit cash balance of £315,362 14s. 7d., there was really a debit of about £385,000. Such was the state of the finances, and if the Government could not explain its finances, and

allowed itself to be financially muddled to such an extent as that, the committee would be perfectly justified in taking away from the Minister responsible for the bulk of this stores account the sum of £25,000, and giving it to a man who apparently understood his business and knew how to spend money.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member would have to get a Message, before he could give this money to anyone.

MR. LEAKE: If the vote before the committee were reduced, the Government would come down with a Message quickly enough. At any rate, if they did not, they would be refusing to help the best man they had in their Ministry—the Commissioner of Crown Lands. The Opposition, at any rate, appreciated the efforts of that gentleman, and recognised his ability, and were prepared to help him to the extent of £25,000. If the Premier declined to do it, that could not be helped; and it would not perhaps be the first time that the right hon. gentleman had not supported the other members of his Ministry. But that was perhaps by the way.

THE PREMIER: Quite so.

MR. LEAKE: The important point he wished to emphasise was that there had been an over-estimate of the cash in hand; that the Government really had not got the cash represented in the balance sheet, and yet they were spending up to the full amount shown upon the Estimates. At any rate, they were treating their stores as cash; and, if the revenue by the end of the year was less than was expected, in what position would the Treasury be? The Government ought to thank the Opposition for making this liberal suggestion to reduce the Estimates of this spending department by £25,000. There were 545 items on the Estimates, varying from £100 up to £50,000, and surely it would not be difficult to spread that £25,000 over a vote of that extent. The department could reduce a great number of those items, and not feel the loss. He wished the committee to emphasise their disapproval of the financial methods of the Government, and to let the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works know that he would no longer be allowed to play ducks and drakes with the revenue; and they wanted, moreover, to assist a well-deserv-

ing department. He therefore submitted to the House his proposition to reduce the vote by £25,000.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): If the hon. member knew anything of the question, he (the Premier) would only be too much obliged to him for his suggestions. Because if hon. members of this House could suggest a way in which the vote could be reduced by £25,000, without doing injury to the colony, all he could say was that he would be much obliged to them. And not only by £25,000, but by £125,000. Suppose the vote were carried, and the Government reduced the amount by £25,000, how was it to be distributed throughout the 500 items? The Government would have to go back and redistribute the amount, because the items were in the Appropriation Bill for the information of hon. members of the other House, and the Government would have to go back and adjourn the debate to rearrange the Public Works Estimate, so as to reduce it by the £25,000. No doubt the Government could succeed in doing that, but he did not know that the Government would succeed in doing it in the best interests of the colony. Hon. members did not seem to think that the Government had gone through the items several times before they were laid before the committee. He (the Premier) had dealt with them a good many times, and cut down a good many items; and the Director of Public Works had been urged by him, not once or twice but a dozen times, to cut down the Estimates, as it was necessary to do so in order to get a balance. He (the Premier) would not be so unjust as to suggest that the Government should strike out all the items that belonged to the hon. member's (Mr. Leake's) district, or some other member's district. Suppose the Government took them from the district of the member for the Murray—[**MR. GEORGE:** Then there would be a row]—or from the district of the member for Central Murchison, or some other place: he did not think those hon. members would be satisfied. Of course it would be furthest from his (the Premier's) desire to do anything of the sort. The proper course to pursue was to deal with each item, and if the leader of the Oppo-

sition or any hon. member could suggest where an item could be struck out or reduced, after having heard the explanation of the Minister of that department, then the committee could strike it out. He did not want to spend sixpence that could be saved; but members must not go like a bull at a gate, and knock off £25,000 without considering who was to be injured and what was to be the result. That course would not suggest itself to anyone who had the interests of the country at heart. The items were brought up in detail, so that hon. members could criticise and, if necessary, reduce them. It would be quite parliamentary if hon. members said, "Here are so many thousand pounds for the Public Works Department: we are not going to give you that amount: we will reduce it by £25,000; but you may spend the balance in any way you like"—that would be parliamentary, because the amount would appear on the Appropriation Act as a lump sum, and the Minister would have to do the best he could with it. But were the committee going to hand over half a million to a Minister—he (the Premier) would not do it if he were on the other side of the House—without saying what it was going to be spent upon? The hon. member (Mr. Leake), in dealing with the Public Works Estimates, took upon himself to bring up the question of the way in which the Government kept the public accounts. He (the Premier) was not an accountant, and was not responsible personally for the way in which the public accounts were kept; but he knew they were kept in the same way as the public accounts were kept in South Australia, and the South Australian system was acknowledged to be the very best in force in all the colonies. The South Australian system had been reported on and approved by a Royal Commission, which represented all the colonies, and that commission reported that the plan adopted in South Australia was the best.

MR. SIMPSON: What was the opinion of the Engineer-in-Chief about the accounts?

THE PREMIER: The Engineer-in-Chief thought very well of them. When first the Engineer-in-Chief came here, there were some details which he did not approve of, but he came from a more advanced colony. He (the Premier) might

say that he had a very high respect for the Engineer-in-Chief as a man who understood the keeping of accounts, and he did not think the Engineer-in-Chief had any word to say against the way in which the public accounts of this colony were kept now. It was more in reference to the Loan Estimates that the opinion of the Engineer-in-Chief differed from that expressed by the Treasurer; but now there was a general loan fund, and if the Engineer was asked his opinion, he (the Premier) thought he would say that the book-keeping in the Treasury was satisfactory.

MR. SIMPSON: His evidence was very strong on the point.

THE PREMIER: The colony had advanced a little since then. We were a progressive people. A good deal had been said about stores being charged as cash. The system the Government adopted in this colony was that when goods were bought in England they were paid for in cash, and they came out to this colony to the Government Store-keeper, and were not charged against the Loan votes and the Consolidated Revenue votes until the goods were used.

MR. GEORGE: And meantime they rusted.

THE PREMIER: That was a matter of management. If more goods were introduced than were wanted, that would be bad. He was not going to say that every part of the administration had been perfect all these years. No doubt there were cases in which goods were indented to a larger quantity than were required. He would not say that such a case had never occurred, but a good deal of care was now taken to see that goods were not indented unless it was found they were required for immediate use after arrival. These goods came out to the colony, and as they were used they were charged against the vote, and the amount of stores represented so much cash. That was the system the Government had adopted, and the balance-sheet, which was not different from the balance-sheet of any public company, showed all the assets and liabilities, and showed the balance to credit or debit. That was the system adopted by other institutions, as well as the Government. The Government also showed the amount of cash in hand. Every quarter anyone could see how the Government

stood. A balance-sheet was issued, and it included the debtor and creditor accounts, the balance, and the amount of cash in hand in London. Take, for instance, the balance-sheet he had before him, that for the quarter ending 30th September, 1897. It showed assets on the one side, and liabilities on the other.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The Premier might quote the balance-sheet for the quarter ending the 30th June.

THE PREMIER said he had not that before him, but the one which he had in hand showed that the amount of cash in the colony and in London was £574,609 1s. 1d.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : All of which was ear-marked.

THE PREMIER : Never mind ; it was at the disposal of the Treasurer of the colony. He did not say we had no obligations, but at the date of the balance-sheet the money could have been used as the Government liked.

MR. SIMPSON : Did the Premier admit that the sovereigns were in stores ?

THE PREMIER said he admitted the balance was in stores, and a good deal more, too.

MR. SIMPSON : There were no sovereigns, but iron rails ?

THE PREMIER : There were a good many sovereigns. The stores would be valued at what the Government had to pay for them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : No.

THE PREMIER : Then some other system would have to be adopted by the hon. member when he sat on the Treasury bench—if ever he did ; but he (the Premier) did not suppose the hon. member ever would sit there. No doubt the hon. member would be able to bring all his experience and knowledge, which he had gained in another colony, to bear on the finances of this country. Under the old system, the stores when brought out were handed to the department, whether the department required them or not, and were charged against the vote. The goods were shown on the account as stores, but the Government had to pay for them ; whereas now they were charged against the vote as the goods were issued. The old plan did not work well. At present the Government had an officer who was responsible to the Treasury for all the stores received. If the Storekeeper issued a

pound of tow or waste, he had to account for it. The Storekeeper was responsible to the Treasury, and so was part of the Treasurer's establishment, and his stores were cash to the Treasury. The Storekeeper knew he could not get away with a penny without an acquittance. The plan adopted was the same as that adopted in every other colony, and he did not know how it could be improved upon.

A MEMBER : The Storekeeper had said that nearly £100,000 worth of stores had disappeared.

THE PREMIER said that, for his part, he did not know where they had gone to. The Storekeeper never told him about this. A good deal of these stores that were shown on the books had not been paid for, and the accounts had not been scheduled. This was now being rectified, and a great improvement was taking place. He had insisted that so soon as the stores were issued they should be scheduled against the vote and credited to the Storekeeper. This was an old, threadbare subject, which the hon. member always would bring up. Plenty of companies published a credit balance of £20,000 that had not a sixpence to their credit, but an overdraft at the bank, yet they had assets in the shape of land and goods. An insurance company, such as the Australian Mutual Provident or the Colonial Mutual, had a great deal of its assets in deeds, which principally represented land, some of which was in Perth. This was allowed under the Act. He was afraid the hon. member only took a superficial view of the question, and should study it a little better. A mere baby could understand the public accounts of the colony. He did not believe that public accounts were kept so clearly in any of the Australian colonies, with the exception, perhaps, of South Australia. He had seen them all, and it would be difficult to ascertain how things stood by examining the public accounts. By looking at our public accounts, one could tell at once what stores there were. They showed the whole thing in a single sheet. He could not think the member for Albany was in earnest in his suggestion. If there was any item on the Estimates that was not required, he was quite willing that it should be struck out. If it could be reduced, he was quite willing to assist in reducing it. The

demands from every part of the country for increased expenditure were large, but till the finances expanded he did not propose to increase the expenditure. If any reduction was to be made, he hoped it would be done in a proper business-like way, and not haphazardly.

MR. WILSON said he had had some little experience of public companies, and he could tell the Premier that all balance-sheets of corporations showed the total assets and liabilities of the company. They not only showed the cash in hand, but all the assets belonging to the company as well. That was quite a different thing from the cash balance-sheet put before the House. This professed to deal with cash transactions only, and he maintained that it was altogether wrong to put down £700,000 worth of stores in a cash balance-sheet.

THE PREMIER: What would the hon. member do with it?

MR. WILSON said he would leave it out altogether.

THE PREMIER: Cash had been paid for these stores.

MR. WILSON: Certainly. The Government had paid cash for their railways and for their public buildings, and we must take all these things into account as part of their assets. Then they would have a correct balance-sheet. This was a cash balance sheet, and if they had spent £700,000 for railways or in stores they had no right to show it on that sheet. The Government Storekeeper, in his report, pointed out the danger of the present system. He said, in that report:—

In respect to the increasing balances on hand each year, I respectfully submit that they contain stores which should have been used or not imported.

This meant that the Storekeeper was afraid he would get a large amount of stores under his control which would never be used; in fact, which would become obsolete, and would have to be practically given away. The Storekeeper went on to say—

And, with a view of assisting to prevent unnecessary importation, I would wish to recommend that Store Regulation No. 3 be enforced, also that the heads of departments responsible for the indenting of stocks not drawn from store within a reasonable period be called upon to state when they are likely to use them.

The Storekeeper found that the amount of stores was increasing every year, and he wanted the people responsible for the obtaining of them to take them over, so that they might not appear on his books. The Auditor General was also very anxious on this point, as in his report he said that, although he was fully alive to the prosperity of the country, it had often occurred to him whether too much cash was not being converted into kind "needlessly, not to say extravagantly." These remarks were conclusive to his (Mr. Wilson's) mind that we were embarking on a very dangerous system. If we bought large quantities of stores and then showed them in our cash balance-sheet as a cash asset, we were certainly adopting a very dangerous principle and one that ought not to be countenanced. These stores became obsolete and of very little value, as was shown by the account of some of the sales in the Storekeeper's report. If we went on with this system of entering up stores as cash, we should soon have to face a very serious loss. The best plan would be not to show this item of stores in the cash balance-sheet at all, but to enter it as a debit. If the item of £700,000 were struck out, there would be a deficit of something like £300,000 instead of a credit balance, and a footnote could be inserted to the effect that there were stores to the value of £700,000. That would be the correct way of keeping the accounts.

MR. DOHERTY: By footnotes.

MR. WILSON: If he were to make up a cash statement for a public company, and were to include in it a large quantity of stores, he would soon be put right.

THE PREMIER: Insurance companies entered up lands in their balance sheets.

MR. WILSON: If insurance companies entered up lands in their cash statements, they were wrong. In a cash statement, cash was dealt with and not kind. That was plain.

THE PREMIER: The plan adopted here was the same as that adopted in South Australia.

MR. WILSON: It was possible for them to be wrong in South Australia.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said it was important, when the Treasurer stated that he had a credit balance of £350,000, the country should know whether he really had that amount of money to spend or

not. The Auditor General, on page 240 of his report, said :—

It is, and has been for some years past, an open secret that until proper and adequate storage accommodation be provided for the Stores Department at Fremantle it will, and must be, an impossibility to classify and arrange the stock on hand in such a manner as to enable my department to discharge its duty satisfactorily. However, this important matter has been brought under notice so often that I am well nigh weary of the subject. I am informed that new stores are now being erected, and so soon as they are completed a thorough stock-taking of all lines should be immediately undertaken in the interest of all parties concerned.

Clearly, from this language, no stock-taking had taken place.

THE PREMIER said he did not think the stock was taken absolutely in detail.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The way in which this £700,000 had been arrived at was by taking the actual money paid for the goods, and not by taking the present value of the stock or allowing for dead, deteriorated, or obsolete stock. The Auditor General further said :—“ I can only hope “ that the shortage may not be found to “ be serious.” This was a distinct hint from the Auditor General that goods were leaving the department without the knowledge or consent of the persons in charge; in fact, that the goods were being stolen.

THE PREMIER : The Auditor General's report did not convey that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Suppose goods for which credit had been taken to the amount of £100,000 as cash, had gone away, could cash to that amount be said to be available for this year? Or, supposing that out of £700,000 worth of goods there had been a deterioration to the extent of £100,000 worth, or goods to that extent had become obsolete, would it be fair to take that amount of stock into the cash account and treat it as an asset to be dealt with during the coming year? It would be impossible to take credit for those stocks unless the stocks were there, which was doubtful, and unless these stocks were available, which was even still more doubtful. This £700,000 worth of stock was in no way a cash asset, as had been argued from the Treasury bench. Again to show how carelessly the department was being worked, he called attention to the small matter of £50,000 referred to on page

241 of the Auditor General's report, which said :—

Cash has been converted into kind without being debited to a vote of the Legislature.

So that, even in a small amount of £50,000, it was only possible to have a partial stock-taking.

THE PREMIER : Who had informed the Auditor General?

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The Auditor General said he was so informed.

THE PREMIER : By whom?

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he could only give the information in the report, which was supposed to be the most authentic document placed before Parliament. If it was not reliable, then the sooner there was another Auditor General the better.

THE PREMIER : The Auditor General's report was all right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Then why dispute it?

THE PREMIER said he was wondering who could have informed the Auditor General. This stock was actually paid for.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : That was no great misfortune. If it had not been paid for, the Treasurer might account for the cash due upon it. Where did the Treasurer get this £384,945 7s. 6d. debit? Where was the money that represented the difference between the £700,000 and £315,000 balance?

THE PREMIER : The hon. member would admit that, if the Government had not bought the stuff, they would have the cash.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Very well; that was all right.

THE PREMIER : The officers of the department got hold of it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Was there £700,000 worth of stock in hand?

THE PREMIER : Yes, and paid for.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Where was the deficiency between the £700,000 and the £315,000 balance?

THE PREMIER said he did not follow the hon. member.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he did not think the Premier did follow him. In order to bring the balance straight, the £700,000 had been put in, and when that was done, instead of coming out with a credit of £700,000, a credit of £315,000 was shown; consequently there

was £284,945 that required to be explained. Probably the Treasurer was not able to answer that question, and perhaps it was not important that it should be answered just now.

THE PREMIER : The same system of accounts had been in existence for 20 years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : When the income of the colony was only £416,000, and the stock represented only £40,000 or £50,000, it would not be so serious a matter; but this was the system that nearly wrecked Victoria through her railways, only the condition of affairs was a little worse there than here. A huge purchasing department was being raised, and it was remarked, though he hoped without truth, that there were commissions at both ends of the stick. If this stores account was going to be a growing account, there must be an accurate taking of stock at actual value.

MR. GEORGE : The object of the hon. member for Albany, in moving for a reduction of this vote, was no doubt to emphasise the great necessity not only for looking after the sovereigns of the country, but also for looking after the goods which were purchased with the sovereigns, and for which the people were liable. The hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had touched on the weak spot in the Financial Statement. With the system of book-keeping which had obtained in this colony for the last twenty years, the stores account was presented in perhaps the only possible way. At the same time, private business could not be conducted on the same lines. Stores to the value of £700,000 were said to be at Fremantle or somewhere about the colony. Suppose a fire occurred, were the stores or buildings insured?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : Yes.

MR. GEORGE : What about the valuable and costly goods stored in the open at Fremantle? The report of the Storekeeper himself stated that there was not sufficient storage accommodation even for the new stores. In going through this store account it was obvious that large quantities of goods had been ordered many years ago which had never been used.

THE PREMIER : Would the hon. member name them?

MR. GEORGE : Yes. One of the items referred to was a number of whip cranes, which had been lying there for some years. In July, 1893, there were 20 whip cranes received into store, and in September, 1893, three more were received, to the total value of over £1,000. These cranes were not perhaps as convenient for dealing with goods in large quantities as the overhead travellers that the Engineer-in-Chief had designed; at the same time, there were numbers of small stations throughout the colony at which goods sheds had been erected, where these appliances would have answered all requirements for the next 20 years, or at any rate where they would have been better employed than in rusting at Fremantle. If the department were a commercial concern, the principals would want to know why so much stock had never been used. Take the question of pig iron. The Government had been purchasing every cargo of pig iron they could get hold of; and yet they kept in stock something like 500 tons of that material. The Government were always certain buyers for that article, though they could not use what they bought; and they had bought 444 tons of pig iron in six months.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : We received 840 tons and used 440. That could hardly be called over-stocking.

MR. GEORGE : From the figures supplied by the Storekeeper, the consumption of pig-iron was 100 tons per year; and so the department had four years' consumption in stock, according to their own figures. He objected to the Government interfering with private trade by stocking nearly four years' stuff which they did not require. The same might be said of duplicate parts of engines. The class G engines were probably the most useful the Government had imported; and yet, although they had ordered duplicate parts for every engine of this class imported, those parts were not issued; and, when an engine came in for repairs and some of the parts were required, it was found far easier to make a part than to get it out of store. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had spoken about taking stock every year; and that was a reasonable and proper thing. It was useless to take stock by dissecting the balances of

the store issues. The stock was not properly checked. True, the Audit officers occasionally checked odd lines; but a business man took stock for the purpose of seeing what he could quickly turn into sovereigns, and was not satisfied until he had overhauled all the goods in his warehouse. If an allowance were made for deterioration and debited against the department which had ordered the stock, much greater care would be taken to avoid overstocking. He did not feel much alarmed with regard to stores being stolen. The Auditor General expressed a hope that few shortages would be found; but it would be unjust to all concerned to assume from this statement that stores had been stolen, though it was possible that some of the stuff lying out in the open air might disappear. He trusted that the Commissioner would look to this question of the stores. The question of stock and stores was quite as important as the balance shown by the bank pass-book. It was this overstocking which caused Victoria to come down with such a smash. At the Newport workshops in Victoria, they stocked timber to season it to such an extent that there was close on £350,000 worth of timber stored there, and, when attention was drawn to it, a great deal of it was found to be entirely spoilt by the weather. With that example before us, it was not too much for a member to rise in his place and ask the Government, who were the custodians of the possessions of the people, to exercise due care in this department.

MR. A. FORREST said he did not intend to criticise the way in which the public accounts were kept, because hon. members had been informed that the accounts were kept on the same lines as the South Australian accounts. He had taken some interest in the cash balance, and it was an important matter whether Government stores should be recognised as cash or not. He took it that Government stores were different from other people's stores. No doubt a year's supply was imported, and in the £700,000 worth of stores which was found on the balance-sheet hon. members were informed that £250,000 worth had not yet arrived in the colony, but the stores had been paid for, and therefore the Government were entitled to set those stores down at their

cash value, because they had to arrive here, and if they did not arrive the insurance on them would be paid. He might inform hon. members that all the Government stores were insured to their nominal value at a very low rate of interest. He considered the Government were not wrong in taking £100,000 worth of rails at Fremantle at cash value. If the rails were not at Fremantle, the cash would be in the Treasury.

MR. SIMPSON: Did rails fluctuate in value?

MR. A. FORREST: That should not be taken into consideration. His opinion was that stock should be taken yearly, as near as practicable, at the Government stores. There no doubt had been a great deal of loss in stock. It was a loose system that was adopted if stock was not taken every year, and he understood that stock had not been taken for years. Stock might have been stolen, or depreciated in value, and he thought the House should insist on the Government having the stock taken, to see what amount of material the Government had stored. Great dissatisfaction existed amongst the contractors to the Government. Many people who took contracts had not large means, but there was great delay when the work was completed in being able to obtain the money from the department. This delay did not occur in other departments, but only in the Works Department, and he thought it should be remedied.

MR. SIMPSON: This stores question was becoming an appalling one in this country. Some years ago it was decided to remove the stores from the Works Department and place them under the Treasurer. Some startling revelations had been made, and it had been decided that the Treasurer should take charge of the department. Hon. members now found that the stores department had grown to such an extent that there were three-quarters of a million pounds worth of stores, and the Auditor General reported as follows: "I am fully alive to the fact that Western Australia is, as she has proved herself to be, a progressive and prosperous colony, but at the same time it has often occurred to me whether too much cash is not being converted into kind needlessly, not to say extravagantly; however I shall refrain

from making any further comments in regard to this very serious matter, on the ground that I may be considered out of order in criticising the action of those responsible for the existing state of affairs." Previous to this the Auditor General made a more serious statement: "It will be seen, on reference to the balance sheet to the 30th June, 1897, that no less a sum than £627,200 7s. 1d. is taken credit for as the value of railway stores on hand on the date in question, and I am led to believe that the liabilities outstanding on railway stores account on the 19th October last reached the sum of £626,710 13s. 6d." That was a million and a quarter of money in connection with the stores department, which was particularly taken charge of by the Colonial Treasurer to safeguard the public interests. There were railway stores to the amount of £626,000.

THE PREMIER: Indented for, the Auditor General meant.

MR. SIMPSON: The country was under an obligation to pay for those stores. Were not those figures appalling, when hon. members considered that there was only a population of only 160,000 people in this colony? He judged from the remarks which fell from the Premier that night that the right hon. gentleman had a deficit staring him in the face. Some little time ago, in that district which was honoured by the Premier's representation, it was proposed to extend the jetty.

THE PREMIER: It was burnt down last night.

MR. SIMPSON said he was sorry to hear it, but supposed it would be reconstructed at all hazards. It was determined in this district some time ago that some repairs or additions should be made to the jetty at Bunbury, and in connection with these repairs it was found that a diving dress was required. The diving dress was used for one fortnight, and the stores department debited that diving dress to the Bunbury jetty, although it was only used on the work for a fortnight, and was available for use on many other works.

THE PREMIER: Another injustice to Bunbury.

MR. SIMPSON said he gave that as an instance of the administration of the Stores department. He did not know what the financiers in Lon-

don, who lent the colony money, would say if they knew that the cash balance was represented by stores in stock. Nothing depreciated faster than machinery. If the English capitalists, to whom we appealed for loans, realised the state of things that actually prevailed, they would say that £2,000,000 was quite enough to borrow in a year, and that we had better get our Stores department in order.

THE PREMIER: Do not run down the country.

MR. SIMPSON: There was no getting away from the fact that the administration of the Stores department was as rotten as a medlar. There were features in connection with the Public Works Department that would well stand reconsideration. Under a former régime he had asked in that House for the cost of drafting plans and inspection in connection with the Architectural department. That department had been reformed, and he congratulated the Minister on the gentleman now placed in charge of it, as he was one of the most accomplished members of his profession in Australia. The Director of Public Works had informed the House that the percentage of the cost of the administration of the Architectural department to the total cost was under 6 per cent., but he (Mr. Simpson) had made up the figures for himself, and found it was nearly 10 per cent.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member was taking the whole Public Works Department.

MR. SIMPSON said he was taking what we had to build. The Director of Public Works proposed spending about a million sterling—£474,000 for public works, and £553,000 for public buildings.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: £515,000.

MR. SIMPSON: The salaries came to nearly £98,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member was talking of the Architectural department, for which the salaries were only £27,000.

MR. SIMPSON said he was taking the figures put before the House, and he repeated that the cost of designing and supervision amounted to very nearly 10 per cent. of the total cost, whereas any business man would undertake to do it at

5 per cent. A good deal of the expense was incurred for public buildings in the back blocks, the erection of which simply meant disaster.

THE PREMIER : More were wanted.

MR. SIMPSON : A distinguished light of the Church had said that every trip of the Premier to the goldfields cost the country 20,000 sovereigns. The impoverished condition of the country was due to the fact that the Premier travelled round the country at election times offering baits to the electors. The right hon. gentleman had been lavish of his promises, and now found that he had promised works in advance of his funds, and that he was hard up. Our Public Works Department here, as in the other colonies—he was not alluding to the Director—had become the appalling danger of responsible government; and if ever a Premier stood up in Western Australia who unconsciously encouraged the process of log-rolling, it was the right hon. gentleman. While the Premier was in London a greater knowledge of the wants of the country and more ability to say “no” was displayed by the Acting Premier than had ever been shown by the Premier. His own electorate (Geraldton) had been justly treated, but that was because of the fair way in which the claims of the district had been put forward. The suggestion of the member for Albany should be taken in good part by the Government. There was no sinister object in making it. It was thought that it would be a good thing to divert £25,000 from the Public Works Department so as to make it available for the Lands Department. It would be very much more to the advantage of the country that the administration should deal with the items than that the House should do it. A similar course had been followed in other countries where a policy of retrenchment had become necessary. In consequence of our having taken over the Great Southern Railway, it was absolutely necessary to find funds for the opening up of that country, and an endeavour should be made if possible to deal with the invasion of rabbits in the south-eastern part of the colony. It would be a graceful act on the part of the Treasurer to carry out the suggestion, it was only a suggestion, of the member for Albany, and divert the sum named

from a department where it could be spared to one where it might be much more advantageously spent, and without any reflection on the Treasurer's financial policy.

THE PREMIER : “*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*”

MR. MITCHELL said that, during the short time he had been in Parliament, he had admired the good temper and firmness generally displayed by the hon. members on the Opposition side; but in their criticism of the Works Department they had been somewhat unreasonable and in many instances, unfair. They put the Director of Public Works between the “devil and the deep sea.” One party was clamouring for this or that work, and another party urging that the Government should not do anything. The expenditure had no doubt been very great, but, with one or two exceptions, full value had been got for the money. He would use his utmost endeavours to uphold the policy of the Works Department.

Amendment (Mr. Leake's) put, and negative on the voices.

Item—Land Resumption Officer :

MR. LEAKE : This officer's salary was increased from £307 4s. 7d. to £375. What was the explanation of the increase?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : This officer had done very difficult and responsible work. Out of 140 claims he settled 112 at a cost not exceeding ten per cent. advance on the amounts offered by the Government, whereas the advance was fifty per cent. when the cases went to arbitration. He was only a temporary officer, who could be dispensed with when necessary.

MR. VOSPER said he would take advantage of this item to inquire why a number of men were being dismissed in the Works Department on the score of retrenchment, while other officers were given increases of pay?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : Last year more men had to be taken on principally in the architect's, water supply, sewerage, and roads and bridges branches, than could now be kept, and in these branches it was now found necessary to retrench by discharging those men.

MR. GEORGE : This land resumption officer had to do with the cases in Roe street, and he was not at all a first-class

man for the position. If he had acted with ordinary tact in those cases, he would have saved the country many thousands of pounds. In the case of a Mrs. O'Leary, on whose behalf some £1,600 or £1,800 was claimed, the Government offered probably £600, and this officer kept offering her £5, £10, and £15, and trying to frighten the woman by telling her she would be liable for all costs. That was not the way to do business. If a reasonable offer had been made on behalf of the Government, the colony would have been saved the expense of arbitration. There was another case, that of a Mrs. Barr, who would have been inclined to accept any fair offer; but "bluffing" was tried, and this Mrs Barr resented. These were instances of incapacity on the part of this officer, which if evinced in ordinary commercial life would have led to his dismissal.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Government considered that this officer had saved the country tens of thousands of pounds; indeed £375 was not a sufficient salary for the services he performed. No more energetic or capable man could be found for the position. He had had a long banking experience, and possessed a general knowledge of values. In the cases that went to arbitration, the cost to the country was fifty per cent. in advance of the amount offered by the Government. In the case of Mrs. Barr, the offer of the Government was £2,039, and the claim made by that lady was £4,000. The arbitrators awarded her £3,782, though that was not such a large sum in comparison with the award to Mrs. O'Leary. The Government offered her £677, she asked for £1,800, and she was awarded £1,100. The principle on which those values were arrived at was not apparent. In a case where the Government offered £6,000, and the claim was for some £20,000, the amount awarded was £15,000. The people who gave that award were not dealing fairly with the Government or with the country. In another case, that of Mr. Hall, the claim was for an enormous amount, and he got £11,000; whereas the best valuation of his property was only £4,000. This award was simply preposterous.

MR. GEORGE: There was no doubt the Government were "got at" in reference to some of the items mentioned by the Commissioner; but in regard to the cases he (Mr. George) had been referring to, he was speaking from personal knowledge. The difference between Mrs. Barr's and Mrs. O'Leary's houses was that the latter was an old and dilapidated cottage, while the former cost over £1,000 to build, the valuation of the land being nearly the same in each case. The mistake made in Mrs. O'Leary's case was in offering her a ridiculous price like £600, and then raising it by £10, and so on. Had the Government made a fair advance, she would have taken the money, whereas they had to pay £1,100 instead of £670. An officer who did business in that way showed a want of tact.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): In the preparation of a Bill which appeared among the Orders of the Day, he had many opportunities of coming in contact with this officer, whom he had consulted with reference to various amendments, and had found him to be a most capable man, who thoroughly understood the work in which he was engaged; and the Director of Public Works would have been utterly wanting in common fairness if he had not stood up for this officer, when his ability and integrity were called in question.

MR. GEORGE said he had not attacked the officer's integrity. He had attacked his ability, and would do it again.

Item passed.

Item—Advertising:

MR. GEORGE: There was a sum of £3,000 put down for advertising, which cost last year £4,948 5s. 9d., and it was reasonable to suppose that the cost would be as much this year. The number of advertisements for tenders might be very much curtailed. It was useless to call for so many tenders at places remote from the scene of operations.

Item passed.

Item—Assistant Engineer-in-Chief:

MR. HIGHAM: This officer, during the absence of the Engineer-in-Chief, had been receiving £1,000 a year, which might well be continued in view of the responsible nature of his duties. He was set down for £800 this year; but it was well-known that the time of the Engineer-in-

Chief would be mainly devoted to the Coolgardie Water Scheme; and this officer would have to perform the other duties of the position.

MR. GEORGE: The return of the Engineer-in-Chief did not appear to have lessened the responsibilities of this officer, and there was no reason why his salary should be reduced.

THE PREMIER: This officer had received an increased salary only because he was temporarily acting for his chief officer.

MR. GEORGE: But he still had the same responsibilities. The Engineer-in-Chief's business was merely that of consulting engineer.

MR. MITCHELL said he hoped the Government would continue to this officer the rate of £1,000. It was very injurious to a man to cut down his salary.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: When the head of a department was away, any subordinate officer who acted for him received an increased salary: but, when the chief officer returned, the salary of his *locum tenens* must revert to the original figure. Had Mr. McDonald been put back to the position he had previously occupied, he would be receiving only £600; whereas he was to receive at the rate of £800, thus obtaining promotion. Moreover, he would continue to be paid at the rate of £1,000 per annum till the end of the present year, part of that salary having been provided for out of the Loan Estimates. The officer was a capable man; but he ought to be well satisfied with the promotion he had received, and also with his salary.

MR. HUBBLE: This officer had carried out his duties with great satisfaction during the absence of the chief officer, and this was felt particularly in Fremantle. It was regrettable that the salary could not remain at £1,000 a year; and it would be only fair if the Minister could see his way to increase the amount within the next few months.

MR. HIGHAM: The attention of the Engineer-in-Chief would be directed to the Coolgardie Water Scheme, and the responsibility of the Fremantle Harbour Works would devolve on the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, and to a great extent this officer would be the consulting engineer. He hoped the Minister would see

his way clear to increase this officer's salary.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Government did not undervalue the services of this officer; he has done excellent work in connection with the Fremantle harbour and the extension of the quay; but the officer was getting fully paid. The way he had risen in the service should be sufficient encouragement to the officer. When hon. members compared the services rendered by the Under-Secretary for Works with those rendered by the officer in question, they would see the assistant engineer was well paid. He (the Director of Public Works) had no intention of giving a promise to increase the officer's salary.

Item passed.

Item—Jarrahdale bridge, Blackwood:

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS moved, as an amendment, that the words "Jarrahdale" and "Blackwood" be struck out, and the words "Kalgan River" be inserted in lieu thereof.

MR. LOCKE understood that the word "Jalbarrow" was to be inserted in lieu of "Jarrahdale." He had been informed that this was so intended in the department.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That was a mistake.

Amendment put and passed.

Item—Geraldton-Northampton road reconstruction:

MR. MITCHELL asked on which part of this road the money was to be expended.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That would depend on the apportionment, which rested with the Minister. He would inquire from what source the application came, and that would then give the hon. member some idea how the money would be apportioned.

MR. MITCHELL: The road ran alongside the railway line, and the money would be better spent on the Northampton road to the Geraldine mines.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS moved, as an amendment, that the word "Geraldine" be inserted after the word "Northampton."

Amendment put and passed.

Item—Menzies-Lawlers road, Mount Ida section:

MR. GREGORY asked whether it was proposed to construct this road only as

far as Mount Ida. The whole of the road, which was 140 miles long, from Lawlers to Menzies was urgently required.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Mount Ida was only the first section. It was proposed to push on with the rest of the work as soon as possible. He moved, as an amendment, that the words, "Mount Ida section" be struck out.

Amendment passed, and item agreed to.

Item—Construction works, Murchison and Peak Hill goldfields:

MR. KENNY said that the history of the water supply to the Peak Hill fields had been a most unfortunate one. About four years ago some miners settled at a spot about 25 miles from Peak Hill. Great difficulty had been experienced in procuring water. When the warm weather set in the surface water dried up, and the miners were compelled to carry their water 18 miles. A few months ago they came upon a rich lode, and 40 leases, comprising 500 acres, had been taken up, for which the Government were receiving between £400 and £500. There were 500 men at work there now. They applied to the Water Department to sink a well. The department sent up some men, who sank three wells 80 feet, and, finding no water, went away. The miners afterwards obtained some water from one of these deserted wells. Unless something was done to give the miners a fair supply of drinking water, they would be compelled to abandon their claims in another month. Somebody was responsible for the maladministration of the Water Department on the Murchison. Six months ago some wells, costing over £100, were spoiled by timbering the wells below water level with green mulga wood, which absolutely poisoned the water, while there was any quantity of stone round about. The Water Department had sunk two wells in that district—one 125 feet and the other 180 feet—and got nothing, while a quarter-of-a-mile away a squatter had a splendid well at 8 feet.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: If any departmental errors were put before him, he would endeavour to get them rectified. They were being rectified now, and the department was doing all it could to meet the wants of the public.

MR. MORGANS asked how the £16,000 on the Estimates, for the item in question, was going to be spent?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS said it was intended to spend it on the construction of works for the development of the Peak Hill goldfield. A large part of it had been already expended in connection with works that were very urgently required. He proposed spending the balance in the way required to meet the demands of the people by supplying water, as also for up-keep both at Peak Hill and on the Murchison.

Item passed.

MR. MORGANS asked whether it was intended to increase the accommodation in connection with the Legislative Assembly Chamber, at an early date. The Minister had, he understood, already made a statement on the subject; but he (Mr. Morgans) desired to point out the lack of conveniences in the reporting gallery. Considerable inconvenience was experienced by the members of the press, owing to the lack of accommodation, and to the fact that when requiring refreshments of any kind, they had to go outside to some public place. In Houses of Parliament elsewhere accommodation was provided for members of the press, and he hoped the Minister would keep this matter in view.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Government had promised that, during the recess, they would take into consideration the question of providing additional accommodation, and the requirements of the reporters would be kept in view.

Item—Perth Hospital, sanitary drainage:

MR. GEORGE: The sum of £2,300 was put under this head. Where was it proposed to carry the drainage?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Into the main drain.

MR. GEORGE: And thence into the river?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: This work was part of the drainage system of the city.

MR. GEORGE: Would there not be considerable danger of infection from fever patients?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The excreta of patients would not be carried into the drain.

MR. GEORGE said he had been chairman of the Sanitary Committee of the City Council for a few weeks, and it was then stated by the Superintendent of the Sanitary Department that at the hospital no distinction was made between the excreta and the refuse of fever patients and those of other patients. In private houses the pans used by fever patients were kept quite separate. He would like an assurance from the Minister that the refuse from fever patients would be dealt with in such a way as to cause no danger of infection.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Public Works Department had nothing to do with the disposal of refuse. All the department had to do was to provide the drains, and the Hospital Board had to deal with the refuse. The department met the board in every possible way.

MR. QUINLAN: This matter had been before the Hospital Board, who had made special provision for removing the excreta of typhoid patients. The surface drain from the hospital might tend to contaminate the river, but the fact remained that refuse equally as bad from hotels and restaurants, found its way into the main drain.

Item passed.

Item—Perth Hospital, new wing, operating theatre, and laundry:

MR. WILSON asked for some explanation of the expenditure of £10,000 on this work.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: This was the expenditure on the new wing of the hospital.

MR. WILSON: There were decided objections to increasing hospital accommodation on the present site. The hospital for contagious and infectious diseases should be removed outside the city, leaving the present building to serve as an accident ward. When smallpox broke out in the hospital a few years ago, the disease spread all through the streets at the foot of the hill.

Item passed.

Other items passed, and the vote agreed to.

Vote—Public Buildings, £553,664:

Item—Additions and repairs to existing Buildings:

MR. LEAKE asked for an explanation of the fact that votes under this head

amounting to about £40,000 were scattered up and down the Estimates.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The votes for additions and repairs to a great many buildings throughout the country had this year been split up instead of put down in one amount. "A stitch in time saves nine," and much money had been saved by attending to the repair of existing buildings. If the money was not required, it would not be expended.

Progress reported and leave given to sit again.

EXTRA SITTING DAY.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the House, at its rising, adjourn until half-past two o'clock on the following day. The House would sit until six o'clock in the evening.

Put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:45 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 17th December, 1897.

Petition: Collie Coal-mine Leasing—Annual Estimates: Public Works votes further considered; Division (Estimates concluded)—Motion: Gratuity to Widow of Dr. Barnett—Motion: Annuity to Widow of Sir F. N. Broome—Lady Broome Annuity Bill: first reading—Sharks Bay Pearlshell Fishery Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Bunbury Racecourse Railway Bill: first reading—Collie Quarry Railway Bill: first reading—Kalgoorlie-Gnamballa Lake and Boulder Townsite Loop Railways Bill: first reading—Paper presented—Orders of the Day and Sudan Alterations (Speaker's remarks)—Police Act Amendment Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 2:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.