

following Message from the Legislative Assembly:—

"Message No. 33.

"Mr. President,

"The Legislative Assembly acquaints the Legislative Council, in reply to the Legislative Council's Message No. 23, that no reasons were given for disagreeing to the Legislative Council's suggestion No. 2 with regard to the Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill, because there is no Standing Order requiring such reasons to be given.

"JAS. G. LEE STEERE,  
"Speaker.

"29th September, 1896."

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 5.25 o'clock, p.m., adjourned to Thursday, 1st October, at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

#### MOTION—HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS AT THE GASCOYNE.

MR. R. F. SHOLL, in accordance with notice, moved—"That all reports and documents in the possession of the Government, relating to the proposed harbour improvements at the Gascoyne, be laid upon the table of the House." He said it would be in the recollection of some hon. members that, in the Estimates for the previous year, a sum of money was voted to provide shipping facilities for the port of Carnarvon, or for harbour accommodation in the vicinity; but, as far as he could gather, practically nothing had been done up to the present. This instance of money being voted but not expended was not peculiar, in the case of this constituency. He had noticed that in other parts of the colony, and especially in the Southern parts, when money was voted for public works, it was expended and the works were hurried on; but in the case of the Gascoyne district, unfortunately, when money was voted for public works, something was always found to stop its expenditure. His object in moving this motion was to obtain all information in the shape of reports or other documents that could be produced bearing on the matter, so as to show what had been done, if anything.

Question put and passed.

#### SUPPLY (REVENUE AND LOANS) BILL. MESSAGE, AND SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

In accordance with a Message from His Excellency the Governor, recommending an appropriation to be made for the purpose of a Bill intitled "An Act to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and from moneys to credit of Loan Accounts, the sum of £350,000 for the service of the year ending 30th June, 1897," the PREMIER moved, and it was agreed, that the Standing Orders be suspended so as to permit of the passing of a Supply Bill through all stages.

Resolutions in Committee of Supply and of Ways and Means having been passed, a Supply Bill in accordance therewith was brought in, providing for the expenditure of £250,000 out of Consolidated Revenue and £100,000 out of Loan funds.

#### Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 30th September, 1896.

Width of Tires Act Amendment Bill: first reading—  
Motion: Harbour Improvements at the Gascoyne—  
Supply (Revenue and Loans) Bill: Message, and  
Suspension of Standing Orders: Bill passed through  
all stages—Metropolitan Waterworks Bill: third  
reading—Judges' Pensions Bill (No. 2): second  
reading: in committee—Registration of Firms Bill:  
second reading: in committee—Waterworks Bill:  
second reading: in committee—Annual Estimates:  
further considered in committee: Railways and  
Works, general Statement—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

#### WIDTH OF TIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by MR. HARPER, and read a first time.

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

#### METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

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

#### JUDGES' PENSIONS BILL (No. 2).

##### SECOND READING.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, who reminded the House that the Bill, after passing through this House, had been withdrawn in consequence of an error in procedure and re-introduced, Bill now read a second time, without debate.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

The Bill passed through committee without debate, and was reported.

Report adopted.

#### REGISTRATION OF FIRMS BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

MR. RANDELL, in moving the second reading, said: This is only a short Bill, but it is an important one to the trading community. I may mention that it is a copy of one that has been in existence in Victoria since 1892 or 1893, and which, I am informed, has worked exceedingly well. It has been asked for here by commercial men, and I find that members of the legal profession are also in favour of its passing through our Parliament. The Bill is a very simple one, and I think it will be easily understood. I should like to refer to some of the clauses. Clause 3 interprets the meaning of "firm" to be "any two or more persons lawfully associated for the purpose of carrying on any business, but shall not include a company registered or incorporated under, by, or in pursuance of any Act of Parliament, letters patent, or royal charter." Clause 4 provides for the registration of firms and persons where a business is carried on under the name of a firm, which name does not consist of the full or usual names of all the partners without any addition; and the clause provides also for the registration of the trading title of any individual carrying on business under any name or addition

other than the full or usual name of that person. Under this Bill, persons writing their names "So-and-so & Co." will be compelled to register the names of the persons comprising the firm, for the information of the trading community. Clause 5 provides that it will not be necessary, in certain cases, to register the names of persons who make temporary contracts, and who do not advertise themselves as carrying on a specified business. Clause 6 prescribes the manner and particulars of registration. Clause 7 requires that the particulars given at the time of registration shall be attested as a statutory declaration. Clause 8 provides that new firms shall be registered before the business is commenced, and that persons already in business shall register within three months of the passing of this Bill. I have not inserted any date upon which the Act shall come into operation, as I wish to leave it to the House to decide that matter; but I am of opinion that if it came into operation on the 1st March next, there would be ample time for persons to register under the Act, as that would leave four clear months after the Bill had passed through Parliament. Clause 9 sets out that the firm-name of any firm or person registered under the Act shall be used in all matters connected with the business carried on by such firm or person. The penalty for default to register without reasonable excuse is, under Clause 12, a sum not exceeding £5 for the first offence, and not exceeding £10 for every subsequent conviction. By Clause 13, power is given to the Court in which an action against a firm is to be tried, to order such firm to register; and under Clause 14, anyone making a false return is deemed to be guilty of a misdemeanour, and will be liable to two years' imprisonment. Provision is also made for the proper keeping of the registrations by the appointed officer, whose official title is the Registrar of Companies. Under Clause 17, any person may inspect, make a copy of or extracts from the statements filed by the Registrar of Companies, on payment of the fee of one shilling; and certificates of registration are to be obtainable on the payment of the fee of 5s., or for each folio of seventy-two words a fee of 6d., or such other fees as may be prescribed by the Governor. Clause 18 provides that, upon

receipt of the prescribed fees, which may be transmitted in stamps, the Registrar of Companies shall send by post a reply to any enquiry made of him by letter, in reference to any registration effected under the provisions of this law. Clause 19 gives power to the Governor to make regulations for the working of the Act, and Clause 20 requires that such regulations shall be published in the *Government Gazette*, and shall be submitted to Parliament, if Parliament be in session when the regulations are framed, or within 14 days of the commencement of the next session of Parliament. The reason for desiring to have an Act of this description is that there is a large increase in the number of business firms in the colony, and it is necessary for the wholesale houses to know whom they are dealing with. Perhaps it is not always the best class of men who come here to enter into business, and legislation of this kind will tend to prevent fraud, and to protect the wholesale merchants. Sometimes persons of financial stability and social position are regarded as members of a certain firm; but when something happens to bring the firm into difficulties, the unfortunate creditors find that the person whom they believed they were trusting disclaims all connection with the firm. This class of cases is likely to increase as time goes on; and as the Bill is calculated to protect fair trading, it is, I believe, generally recognised that it should be passed without delay. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. A. FORREST: I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill. A difficulty has been experienced, as the member for Perth has said, in ascertaining, in many cases, who really are the members of a firm which does not trade under the name of the proprietors. "Jones & Co." may be the most respectable firm in the colony, but the people with whom they are doing business can find out who the partners are only by asking their bankers to give that information. I am sure it will be a source of satisfaction to members of the community who are engaged in trade to be able to find out, from a public and official record, whom the title of a business really represents. I am pleased that the Bill demands only a small fee

for registration; as, that being the case, registration will be no hardship upon the old-established houses, which will have no objection to paying a fee of only 5s. I am sure the difficulty of identifying the owners of businesses, in many cases, has been felt for years, and it is a matter for congratulation that a Bill which will put an end to all doubt on this point has been brought in by the member for Perth. In my own business, sometimes, when we have been asked to supply new people, I have been able to learn only from a bank who were the persons comprising that firm. I give my most hearty thanks to the member for Perth for introducing this Bill, because I am sure every man who has anything to do with business in Western Australia will be pleased indeed to be able to learn who represents a particular firm in the colony.

MR. WOOD: I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill. Last session I took a step in the same direction, but it was not received very favourably. There is one class of gentleman which I think this Bill will get at: that is the sleeping partner who stays in the firm as long as things are going all right, and directly things are getting a little shaky he quietly crawls out and gets rid of his responsibility. I think this Bill will stop a great deal of what is illegitimate in trade, and it has my warmest support. I hope it will be carried; indeed, it is sure to be carried.

MR. SOLOMON: I have much pleasure also in supporting the second reading. I know from my own experience that, in a great many cases in which firms go insolvent, the men who have always been regarded as partners have been set down as creditors. I have had more than one case of that kind under my notice. The Bill will do away with such abuses, and will be of great benefit to the commercial community. There are many traders who do not trade in their own name, but ostensibly as a company, and no one can tell who the parties are. This want of exact knowledge causes a great deal of difficulty. I feel sure the Bill will be of great importance to the community generally.

MR. LOTON: I also desire to accord my support to the second reading of this Bill. The member for South Fremantle has told us he knows of a number of

dishonest traders in Western Australia. Well, it seems to me that these people must exist in the neighbourhood of Fremantle. I have had a fairly large experience in business, and I must say I have not come across the sleeping partners who attempt to crawl out of their liabilities. There may have been such cases, but they have been confined to a small class in the community.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** There is just one thing I may point out, and that is as to the smallness of the penalty provided for failing to comply with the Act. If a man is to be fined only £5 or £10 for not registering his firm, there are plenty of people who would risk so slight a punishment and not obey the law. It seems to me these small penalties will make the measure pretty well a dead letter.

**MR. A. FORREST:** We can alter that in committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Commencement of Act:

**MR. RANDELL** moved that the word "March" be inserted in the blank in the second line, after the words "first day of."

Put and passed, and clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 11, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 12—Penalty for default in registration:

**MR. A. FORREST** said a man might unwittingly neglect to register, and therefore it would be sufficient to leave the maximum fine for a first offence of this kind at the sum of £5; but as a second conviction would show there was wilful and continued disobedience of the law, the penalty should be made an exemplary one. He moved, as an amendment in the last line, that the word "ten" be struck out, and the words "one hundred pounds" be inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 18, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 19—Registrar General, &c., to send reply to enquiries:

**MR. RANDELL** pointed out that the marginal note, containing the words "Registrar General," did not harmonise

with the body of the clause, which spoke of the "Registrar of Companies."

Marginal note amended to agree with the clause.

**MR. MOSS** suggested that, until the Government adopted the Victorian system, which was found to work very well, of requiring all Supreme Court fees to be paid in stamps, it would be found inconvenient to receive stamps in payment for services rendered by the Registrar of Companies.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt)** said it might be convenient for people in the country to send stamps in payment of the fee for making an enquiry, and he thought the Registrar might therefore receive them.

**MR. LOTON** said the fee was really paid to the Crown in money, as the sender had to buy the stamps.

**MR. RANDELL** asked that the clause might be allowed to stand without amendment, in the interest of country people.

Put and passed.

Clauses 20 and 21—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

#### WATERWORKS BILL.

##### SECOND READING—DEBATE RESUMED.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** When I moved the adjournment of this debate, I thought I should have an opportunity of looking through the Bill; but, unfortunately, I have had other business in hand, and have not been able to do so. I do not know that there is anything special in it that would warrant me in detaining the House while I deal with it. As far as I am personally concerned, I look upon this Bill with great suspicion, for the reason that in Victoria we had some experience of these water schemes, and in many cases the schemes resulted in disaster of the most serious character. The municipalities have not kept their engagements, the water trusts have utterly failed, and the cry has been all through the country for a national system of water supply. I very much suspect that, in the end, the operations of this Bill will lead to something like the same results. There will be a general cry throughout the country that water should be supplied by the State out of the national funds; and, if that

happens, we shall not get back the money which the Government propose to expend, and we shall not get the income from the water that the Government reckon upon. As a matter of fact, immense public works are now being started in all parts of the colony, and when these works start in one place, there will be a demand for them from other parts of the colony, and those demands will involve a large expenditure. A good deal may be said on the side of a national system of water supply; but the question is whether this House is prepared, when dealing with this Bill, to look with satisfaction at the prospect of going into a scheme of that kind. I take it for granted that the Government propose to make these waterworks reproductive. I judge that from the nature of this Bill, but I have a great suspicion we shall not have success in that direction. However, I have no desire to further defer the consideration of the Bill. I regret I have not had time to give it close consideration, but I hope other members have had time to do so, and that they will let us have their views in regard to it.

MR. TRAYLEN: It strikes me that it would be difficult to show that the rates will give 6 per cent. on the capital outlay upon a scheme of waterworks, and that, I think, will be a barrier to almost any place partaking of the benefits offered by this Bill. Another matter I desire to call attention to is the complete change in this Bill in the imposition of rates as compared with the system in the Municipal Institutions Act. That Act expressly provides that the onus of payment falls first upon the occupier—that is the person who derives the benefits from the distribution of the rates; and that seems a very proper arrangement. In order that the municipality should not be the ultimate loser, owing to the poverty of the occupier, it is provided that the owner may be called upon to pay the rates, if the occupier fails to do so. In this Bill it is entirely the other way about. The owner is made liable for the rates, although he is not the person in the first instance to be benefited by the supply of water under this Bill. I ask the Attorney General to reconsider this matter, and to make the occupier, as being the person who gets the benefit, the first person to be called

upon to pay the water rates. It will be an especial hardship in this case, where a property has been leased for three, four, or seven years in advance, for there are no means by which the owner can obtain the rates under this Bill from his tenant, and he must himself pay up the 2s. in the pound, for that which is of no benefit whatever to himself. This seems to me to be a faulty arrangement, and I hope that, in committee, it will be altered, and that the provision dealing with the onus for the payment of rates will be brought into line with the similar provision in the Municipal Institutions Act. I will say, further, that not only do I disagree with the principle I have just criticised, but I notice that, under this Bill, the Government have to depend upon rate books for sources of information. In those rate books it will be found that the occupier is rated, while in the Bill it is expressly stipulated that the owner shall be rated; so that there cannot fail to be a considerable amount of confusion, if this Bill is allowed to stand in its present form. I hope the Attorney General will propose some modifications of the Bill as regards the rating, when in committee.

MR. VENN: I have gone through this Bill, and it has occurred to me there is no great reason for two distinct principles to operate in our Waterworks Act. We have passed a Bill through this House dealing with the waterworks of Perth, and in that Bill it is distinctly provided that the works shall be placed in charge of a board. If the principle is a good one, and I believe it is a good one and a sound and proper principle to work upon, I cannot understand why the waterworks to be constructed under this Bill should not be vested in boards instead of in a Minister. I think it would be better to adopt the system of appointing boards, and vesting in them the powers now proposed to be vested in the Minister. Hon. members who have not read this Bill will please take notice of that departure of principle, and consider whether the Bill should not be based upon the principle already approved in the Metropolitan Waterworks Bill. Personally, I think no reason has been shown, by the Premier in his speech, why the board system should not apply to this Bill. The Premier simply referred to the matter in

a cursory manner. Apart from that point, there is nothing in the Bill to cavil at. The details of the Bill are such as may give rise to some discussion, particularly on those points referred to by the member for Greenough; but I simply make these remarks with the view of drawing the attention of hon. members to a principle in the Bill which should be first considered.

**THE PREMIER:** No doubt there is a good deal in what the hon. member has said in regard to what is the best way of managing these waterworks; but it seemed to the Government that, in the smaller towns of the colony, there might be some difficulty in getting suitable persons to undertake the work of managing these water supply schemes; and it seemed to us it would be better, in the early days at any rate, until the towns have become larger, that the management should be in the hands of a department. In South Australia, I may say, the waterworks of the city of Adelaide are managed by a department, and not by a board, and I understand the system works very well. I do not think we shall be able to find persons in the various towns of the colony able to give their time to attend to this work properly; and it seemed to us better to have a manager or managers—a manager for several towns where possible. In some towns small amounts only may be required for providing water supply. There are towns that perhaps could be supplied for an outlay of £2,000, and in those cases it would be difficult to get a board to look after a small matter like that. For these reasons the Government would not proceed with the plan of having a board for every place. Altogether, looking at the circumstances of the various towns of the colony, it will be found that, for the beginning at any rate, the plan of having these works under the control of a manager, subject to a Minister, will work better than having a board. I can quite understand that in large cities, where you have a large selection of suitable persons to take seats on boards, it might be better to have a board; but I am inclined to think the Bill will be found more workable in its present shape than if it provided for the appointment of a board to take charge of every water scheme.

**MR. VENN:** I wish to point out that there is a tendency in this colony to throw everything on the Government, and get everything out of them. I was going to say that, if the responsibility is thrown on the people themselves, they will realise it; but they will not realise it if the Government does everything for them.

**THE SPEAKER:** The member for Wellington is out of order, having already spoken on the motion.

**MR. SOLOMON:** I wish to make a remark as to the boards already in the colony, many of which are not working satisfactorily. I met a gentleman the other day from New South Wales, where the board system is largely used, and he informed me it has not given satisfaction, and that there is a desire for a system similar to that provided by the Bill before the House. I notice that no provision is made for a municipality purchasing its waterworks in the same way as provision is made in the Metropolitan Waterworks Bill for the city to purchase its works.

**THE PREMIER:** There are no such provisions in the Metropolitan Waterworks Bill.

**MR. SOLOMON:** I refer to the power of purchasing the debentures, so that the rates shall be reduced in a similar manner to the system provided in the Metropolitan Waterworks Bill. Something of that kind might be arranged for in this Bill. There is also a matter regarding the equity of assessment for water rate. As I understand this matter, it often happens that a person owns a warehouse or a shop where no water is used, and yet has to pay the rate for that warehouse or shop, while, at the same time, he pays the water rate for other premises where water is required.

**THE PREMIER:** The Bill provides that the rates shall not exceed 2s. in the pound, and also that they can be reduced if necessary.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

The House went into committee to consider the Bill.

#### IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 4—The Governor may appoint Minister to administer Act:

**MR. VENN** said he did not realise the disability of the smaller towns to have

their waterworks under boards. There could be one general board for the city of Perth, and they could deal with the whole of these questions in the same way as a Minister, and the manager would be appointed by them in exactly the same way as the Minister appointed managers. He did not realise that it would be absolutely necessary that each district or town should have a local board. That would depend upon the chief board deciding whether or not it was desirable. He did not think there could be any difficulty in working the Bill under a general board better than under a Minister. Such a system would relieve the Minister of unnecessary trouble and responsibility, and place both upon persons prepared to accept them.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 and 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Owners or occupiers may petition for water district:

MR. RANDELL said that, under this clause, both owners and occupiers were made liable for the rates; while Clause 31 was somewhat contradictory.

THE PREMIER said he was inclined to think, on looking through the Bill, that it would be desirable to give the power to petition for a water supply to the owners only. It seemed to him that, if they included occupiers in the clause, they would probably find a number of small ratepayers desiring to include a very large amount of property adjoining them in the operations of the Bill, without the consent of the owners. He had no doubt the Bill would be altered as time went on, and as they discovered that it needed amendment; but at the present time it would be more reasonable, and more likely to give satisfaction, if the owners of the land were to have the power of deciding whether they should be rated or not. He therefore proposed, as an amendment, that the words "or occupiers" be struck out of the first line of the first paragraph.

Amendment put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved, as a further amendment, that the words "or occupiers," in the last line of the first paragraph, be struck out.

MR. SOLOMON asked what would be the position of those municipalities that had already a water supply.

THE PREMIER said only those towns requiring a water supply, and petitioning for it, need come under the Bill.

Put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved, as a further amendment, that all the words after the word "number," in the first line, to "owners," in the second line of the last paragraph, be struck out; the effect of the amendment being that only the owners of land should petition for a water supply.

Put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved, as a further amendment, that the words "last mentioned," in the third line of the last paragraph, be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 16, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 17—Certain lands may be assessed after general yearly assessment has been made:

MR. LOTON said the owner seemed to be the person who was liable to pay the rates, whereas the occupier ought to be the first person called upon, the owner being called upon only after the occupier failed to pay. If it was desirable to make the occupier liable in the first instance, it should be done in this clause.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the point arose more in connection with Clause 33. He thought the tenant should be liable, but it had to be remembered that the occupier had nothing to say in connection with the petition for waterworks, but only the owner; so there was not the same reason to make the tenant liable as there was in the Bill as originally drafted. If the occupiers did not want water, one could not imagine owners giving it to them simply for the fun of the thing. The matter needed consideration, and it might be well to report progress to consider the necessary amendments.

MR. RANDELL said the owners would generally pay the rates and charge them on the rent. That was the principle many landlords were adopting.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said there was no necessity to report progress. The matter was one purely of contract; the usual practice in large cities being that in ordinary houses the owner paid the rates, while in the case of business men with a long tenancy, generally arrangements were made with them to pay the rates in

addition to the rent, and that practice should be observed in the particular case before them. Where the State was lending money for the construction of waterworks on the security of the rateable property, they should look to the owners of the property and not to the occupier, for the rates.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 30—Where several houses supplied by one pipe, each to pay water rates:

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the clause needed looking into, as it affected joint tenants.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said the clause was a usual one in all Waterworks Acts.

Put and passed.

Clauses 31 to 58, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 59—Compensation to be made for temporary occupation:

MR. RANDELL asked if provision were made for the Minister to repair streets that had been broken up.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said there was a clause to that effect.

Put and passed.

Clauses 60 to 74, inclusive—agreed to.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL suggested that the rest of the clauses, after side notes were read, should be put together instead of putting each one separately, as there was nothing new in them.

THE CHAIRMAN said the reason he had not taken that course during the present session was that he found, invariably, that even putting the clauses in the manner he was doing, some member would ask him to go back to a previous clause, and it was only by stretching the Standing Orders that he had been able to accommodate those hon. members. If that were the case with the method he had adopted, it would be much more so if he adopted the shorter practice suggested.

Clause 75—Minister may let meters:

MR. HIGHAM said no provision was made by which special trades were compelled to have meters and pay for the water they actually consumed.

THE PREMIER: The regulations will fix that.

Put and passed.

Clauses 76 to 111, inclusive—agreed to.

THE CHAIRMAN explained that he had generally put the preamble to the committee; but it was not necessary to do so, as the same form of preamble was

almost invariably used; and so he would not do so in future, unless there was something new in the preamble.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

### RAILWAYS AND WORKS—GENERAL STATEMENT.

On the motion that the House go into Committee of Supply, for further considering the Railways and Works Estimates,

MR. ILLINGWORTH said: I ask whether the mover will allow this matter to stand over till Tuesday next, as it is desirable to have the annual statement of the Minister and the debate together. I am satisfied that the reports of these departments are not ready; and, besides that, there are members not here who are anxious to hear the Minister when he makes his statement.

THE PREMIER: They can read it in print.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): I propose to adopt the course usually adopted, by making my statement now, and immediately afterwards I will lay the annual reports of these departments on the table. I have the reports here ready, and I will follow the course adopted by my predecessor. If that is acceptable to the House, I prefer to go on now, as I am ready to do so.

Question put and passed, and the Speaker left the chair.

### IN COMMITTEE.

At 6.25 p.m. the CHAIRMAN left the chair.

At 7.30 p.m. the CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

### *Railways and Tramways, £476,950:*

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse), in making the annual statement of these departments, said: At last the opportunity is afforded me of placing before this House a statement of the working of the railways, and also of giving a report on the progress of public works in the colony.



I regret that I have not before this been able to make the statement, owing to various causes, and I very much appreciate the forbearance which has been shown on the several occasions when it has been desirable that the matters I have to deal with should have been placed before hon. members. Of course the causes of the delay have been, in a measure, beyond my control; otherwise I should have had the satisfaction of dealing with these subjects much earlier. I notice it is expected that, in giving a report such as I hope to be able to give this evening, I ought to deal with all matters of importance in connection with the railways and public works of the colony, for the reason that the railways and works come so closely into contact with the people, and form a great part of the public departments of the colony—in fact, these are the great money-spending departments, and no doubt this House and the country desire that a full statement should be given of the working of these departments. I am pleased to say that I shall be able to-night to present a most satisfactory report of the working of the railways during the past year. I think when I have placed before you the figures which I have here, and which I hope will not be wearying to the House, you will agree with me that the statement is one which I think any Government should be proud of; showing, as it will, that our railways, from a financial point of view, stand pre-eminent in Australasia.

*Railways Open and Results of Working.*

The number of miles of railway open, including those which have been opened during the past year, has not exceeded in a great degree the mileage open last year. The mileage stands at 588 miles open at the present time, this total being only a few miles more than was open at this time last year. It was mentioned, in the report made to this House last year, that a steady improvement had been made since the year 1890; and although the Railway Department showed, by the report of last year, that a great improvement had been made in that year as compared with the year 1890, yet there was still room for further improvement. According to that report, the percentage of working expenses to gross

revenue in 1895 was 61·50; and when a comparison was made with other colonies, such as New South Wales, where the percentage of expenses to gross revenue was 56·58, also with South Australia 56·98, and with Victoria 59·99, the department then congratulated itself that it was placing before the country a fact of which we were all proud. Although this satisfactory improvement did take place, I am pleased to be able to show now that there has been a still further and a more satisfactory improvement; and I will proceed to show, by figures I have here, that the percentage of working expenses to gross earnings for this year make a comparison very much better than it did at any time in the past—in fact, Western Australia can now show the best results that have ever yet been obtained in the Australian colonies. In the year 1890, the percentage of working expenses to gross earnings was 114·46; in 1891 it was 99·22; in 1894·5 it had decreased to 61·50; and, as I pointed out just now, in 1895·6, the year just past, I am pleased to be able to say it has been still further reduced, and that the percentage now stands at 49·79, which is, I think, the lowest percentage of working expenses to gross earnings ever reached in Australasia. The percentage in New South Wales for 1895·6 stands at 55·02; and when we consider that the New South Wales railway system is looked upon as the best managed in Australia, I think the Government here have reason to congratulate themselves on the state now existing with regard to our railways.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It will never happen again.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Although the member for Nunnine says it will never be so again, and that we must wait till next year to see what that brings forth, I say that of course we do not expect to be able to place such satisfactory figures before this House next year, considering the large extensions that are taking place in our railways and the increased number of improvements and developments, and taking into consideration other contingencies which must in a measure cause great expense on our lines, thereby lessening the percentage of earnings to gross

revenue. Still, I think we shall be able to show a very satisfactory state of affairs, at the end of the current financial year.

*Financial Results—a comparison.*

I will further compare our railways with those of the adjacent colonies. We find that New South Wales has a percentage of 55·02 of working expenses to gross earnings; Queensland comes next with 56·75, South Australia with 59·26, and Western Australia has, as I have pointed out, a percentage of 49·79. I think this is a very proud position indeed for us to occupy. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Does that cover interest?] No. Taking this financial result of the traffic for the past year, we find that the traffic has very largely increased. In the year 1893-4 the tonnage taken over our railways was 204,686, and in 1895 the tonnage was 255,839—not a very large increase, as you will see, but still an increase—while the tonnage for 1895-6 was 427,919, being more than double that of 1893-4. Although this large increase has taken place, the amount of extra capital expended upon open lines shows only a slight increase; therefore it is scarcely to be wondered at that the financial results are almost phenomenal in the history of railway management. I would like to point out that we estimated the revenue for the past year at £360,000, and that the actual earnings reached £529,615, being an increase over the estimate of £169,615. The expenditure was estimated at £224,700, and the amount really expended in that year was £263,704, thus exceeding the estimate by £39,004; so that the excess of revenue of £169,615 was earned at an increased expenditure of only £39,004. This is also satisfactory, showing that the expenditure must have been kept down, and also taking into consideration the large amount of traffic that was handled during the past year. The gross revenue for the year 1895-6 was £529,616, and the working expenses were £263,705, thus leaving a surplus over working expenses of £265,911, which equals 11·48 on the total capital cost of £2,316,824. When we remember that an English technical paper recently said our percentage of net revenue to capital cost of 5·44, as the result of working in 1894-5, was hardly paralleled anywhere,

it would therefore appear that 11·48 for 1895-6, on a system of railways assuming somewhat larger proportions, is probably unique. When I tell the House that during the past year we carried over our railways 1,679,816 passengers, I think this is a fact on which we may congratulate ourselves. Indeed we have, during the past year, conveyed on our railways a number equal to sixteen and a half times the whole population of the colony; and this fact shows, at any rate, the usefulness of our railways. Putting the matter in another form, I would like to point out that by the accountant's returns, which appear in the reports that will be before hon. members, the total interest on a capital of £2,316,824 is £94,533; and if this amount be deducted from the amount by which the total revenue exceeds the total working expenses, namely £265,911, it leaves a net surplus balance over interest and working expenses amounting to £171,378; and, on the assumption that the interest chargeable on £149,356 contributed from time to time from Consolidated Revenue towards railway construction at four per cent., amounting to £5,974, is not actually payable, then this amount, if added to the surplus as before given, would show a profit of £177,352.

*Previous Loss and Present Profit.*

According to the tables which hon. members will have an opportunity of seeing in the printed report, there is a comparison of this year's results with those of previous years, from which it appears that a loss in 1890 of £6,527 is converted, in 1896, into a profit of £265,911; and, if interest is taken into consideration in both cases, it shows that while, in 1890, there was a loss of £39,993, yet in 1896 there is a surplus profit, after paying all interest and expenses, equal to £171,378. This surplus is, as I have said, after paying all interest and working expenses; so that it really shows we are in a position to-day which I have been able to point out as being unique in the history of railways in Australia.

*Mileage, Cost, and Earnings.*

I now come to the mileage, capital cost, and net revenue for the years 1890 to 1895-6, and I will take one or two of

these years to show the difference, by way of comparison. In 1890, the miles of railway open were 183, and the gross earnings were £45,113; and, as I pointed out before, the working expenses were £51,640, the result showing a loss of £6,527. Then, for comparison, we will take the year 1894-5, when 573 miles of railway were open, and the capital cost was £2,092,372; the working expenses being £182,046, and the gross earnings were £296,000; the result, as previously stated, being a net revenue of £113,954, with a percentage to capital cost equal to 5·44. Then, coming to the year 1895-6, being the last financial year, we have, I again repeat, reached these magnificent figures of 11·48 as the percentage of net revenue to capital cost; and I think this result shows we are really making progress with our railways. Further, comparing the percentage of net revenue to capital cost of the railways in this colony during the last financial year, with some other railways in the adjacent colonies, for the latest period of which we have the means of comparison, and taking New South Wales in particular, as having, it is said, the best managed railway system in Australasia, we find the percentage of that colony was 3·44, which is a long way behind our own figures of 11·48. In the case of Tasmania, a country almost in a similar condition to our own, the population being actually greater, and at the time this return was prepared it was something like 50,000 more than the population in our own colony, our population being about 104,000, we find the percentage of net revenue to capital cost for the average miles worked was 0·83. I mention these figures to show what a difference there is between ours and the railway system of Tasmania, with a population of 50,000 persons more than our own. Next, we will take the earnings and expenditure per mile per annum for the purpose of further comparing results. The gross earnings and expenditure, and the net earnings for the average mileage of railways worked during the years 1890 to 1895-6, were as follow: In 1890 we had 188 miles of railway working, and the receipts per average mile worked were £239 19s. 3d., and the expenses per average mile worked were £274 13s. 8d.; the net earnings per average mile worked showing a loss

of £34 14s. 5d. Comparing these results with those attained in the last financial year, we find that in 1895-6 the receipts per average mile worked had increased to £913 2s. 7d., and the expenses per average mile worked had also increased to £454 13s. 3d.; but the net earnings per average mile worked, instead of being a loss, as in the previous case, showed a profit of £458 9s. 4d. Again, by way of comparison, we are next to New South Wales in ratio, the receipts per average mile worked in that colony being £1,114, although the expenses per average mile worked were £613 as compared with £454 13s. 3d. in this colony. Now we will compare the relative train mileages, and the earnings and expenditure per train mile. In 1890, the train miles run were 284,807; in 1894-5 they had increased to 997,540; and in 1895-6 they had reached the large total of 1,541,750. Then in 1890 the earnings per train mile were 38·01 pence; in 1894-5 they had reached 71·22 pence; and in 1895-6 the earnings were 82·44 pence per train mile. The expenditure also per train mile in 1890 was 43·51 pence; in 1894-5 it was 43·79 pence. I wish you to note that, although we had increased the working expenses, and other conditions were against us owing to the difficulties we had to deal with, this return shows that our working expenses per train mile were in 1895-6 further reduced to 41·05 pence. There is no doubt that these satisfactory figures may be attributed in a great measure to many causes, but the principal of these are, I think, the management and the improvement in grades. There is no doubt that to the careful management which our railways have had during the past year, and in consequence of the management using the rolling stock in a much better way than probably they have been used in former years, the working of our railways has been economised in a great measure, being kept under proper command. I think that, by making use of our trucks and engines in this way, these causes have assisted in a great measure to bring about the satisfactory result I have stated. I would also like to say that I am sure the improvements which have been carried out in the grades, especially those on the Eastern Railway deviations, the outlay on which has been money well

spent, have enabled us to carry almost a double load with the same locomotive power as compared with the period previous to the deviations being made. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is that so?] I do not intend to say quite a double load, but the reduction of grades is pretty considerable, and hon. members know that the old line travelled over a grade which was, I think, considered dangerous, and was certainly hard to surmount; but, with the improved grades on the deviation, the locomotive power is made use of to such an extent that it has enabled us to deal very much better with the traffic than we could otherwise have done. The average cost per mile of the average miles worked during the last financial year has been £3,995; and comparing these figures with those obtained from the other colonies, we find that in Queensland, which comes next, the average cost per mile has been £6,945. I mention Queensland particularly because her railways are on the same gauge as our own, and the comparison shows that our railway system has cost less than any of the railways of Australia. Probably this is not a matter to commend ourselves upon in any great measure, but it is perhaps one which we should look into, for although we have had cheap railway construction in this colony (especially to our goldfields and other parts), still in these figures we are not yet taking into consideration the cost of railways to our goldfields so much as in the case of those which have been made in the more settled districts.

#### *The Alleged Starving of Railways.*

Comments have been made on the way in which our lines have been starved. It has been pointed out, for instance, that we are not providing on our railway system those facilities which ought to be supplied, and which are necessary for securing the safety of the public.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You know that; don't you?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: There is no doubt that in the past our railways have been constructed on a cheap principle, and I think we were wise in constructing them upon that principle in the past, for we had to grow with the country, and if we had come to this House and asked for authority to spend

£5,000 a mile in constructing our railways at the earlier period, instead of £3,900 a mile, then, probably, we would not have got the Railway Bills carried through the Legislature. But Parliament was no doubt wise in its generation, and it went along steadily at first, and in that way we have been able to judge of the requirements of the country. The increase I have quoted in regard to the passenger traffic, and other figures I have stated, show that our railways are progressing, and also that we must now improve our railway system, especially that portion which is travelled over to the greatest extent, particularly the Eastern railway and the goldfields railways, and those leading to the busy parts of the colony; that it is now the duty of the Government to make these railways as safe as possible for the travelling public.

#### *Interlocking System and Safety.*

A commencement was made, some time ago, to provide the interlocking system, and the first instalment of that system has now been completed, and is in operation at the Perth railway station. It is the desire of the Government to still further extend the system of interlocking, and I think you will agree with me that, in extending it, we are justified in doing so, and justified also in expending the money that it will entail to secure the safety of the travelling public, and also to ensure the safe working of our trains. There is one other thing I would like to mention, and it is that although the expenditure may appear large, still, taking into consideration the saving that must eventually take place in the working of our railways by the reduction of the staff as a result of adopting the interlocking system generally, and seeing that we might thus prevent a serious loss of life and perhaps large claims for compensation on account of injury which may be avoided by adopting these improved appliances, I think that now, when we are in a position to adopt the interlocking principle and other appliances, it is the duty of the country to assist the Government in providing funds necessary for putting our lines on such a basis as will remove all doubt or anxiety from the minds of the public as to the question of safety.

While I am on this subject, I should like to draw attention to another point. The railways of New South Wales are generally considered to be the best managed railways in Australia; and when the New South Wales Chief Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Eddy, visited the International Railway Congress that was held in London last year, he was asked this question:—"Do you consider that any railway for conveying passengers, with a considerable traffic both in goods and passengers, can with the fullest safety be worked without the aid of the block and interlocking system?" Mr. Eddy replied "No." We must all, I think, agree with Mr. Eddy's reply. The Government, in the interests of the country, should try to make the railways in this colony as safe as possible; and if they wished to save expenditure by not doing so, their action would probably bring upon them condemnation rather than praise.

*Improvements Projected.*

There is one thing I should like to deal with at this stage, and that is the improvements which are to be made on the open railways. As I have just stated, and as was pointed out by the Premier last night when moving the second reading of the Loan Bill in this House, the Loan Bill contains the item of £1,000,000 for additions and improvements to opened railways. That appears to be a very large item, probably, to those who do not know what is going on in the country; but when we take into consideration that we are dealing with improvements in so many quarters, I think the item will be passed by this House. It has been the expressed wish of this House that the duplication of the line between Fremantle and the Midland Junction shall be undertaken. (MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.) It is also the expressed wish of the House that further improvements should be carried out; and, in carrying out the wish of this House, we shall, besides duplicating the line to Midland Junction, enlarge the wayside stations and provide interlocking gear, and we shall improve the Midland Junction Station, these various works costing £162,000 out of £1,000,000 provided by the Loan Bill for additions and improvements to opened railways. Of

course this is a large sum. In speaking last night, the Premier mentioned that £64,000 would be required for the duplication of the line; but I am now presenting the items in detail, and showing that there are also many sidings, stations, and enlargement of stations which were not included in the £64,000 for the duplication. We have also to provide for urgent wants at Fremantle; and those members who have visited that port lately will have seen that the harbour reclamation work is going on apace, and that we are preparing there for the extension of our station improvements. These works will no doubt take some time to carry out, as the Premier pointed out, in speaking on the Loan Bill—probably two years or more, but it is as well for us to be prepared to commence them as soon as possible, with the object of providing as soon as we can the necessary facilities for the accommodation of the rapidly growing traffic. These necessary improvements at Fremantle will absorb another £150,000. I may say that, of this amount, a portion is to be spent on the erection of large goods sheds, and also on new lines which are needful to meet the requirements of the department and the public. At Fremantle, we have had to deal with an enormous increase in the traffic, and in order to minimise the danger from the running of so many trains, we have had to double the line a little beyond the East Fremantle station. I want to point out, as one justification for the Government in asking for such a large vote for the railways, that besides the items of expenditure which I have mentioned, the list comprises additions and improvements to the Perth station, including purchase of land, £296,500; the commencement of the erection of the Midland workshops, £80,000; the equipment of the lines with electric staff signals and indicators, £40,000; and fire prevention appliances for the principal stations, £10,000. On the Yilgarn Railway £45,000 will be wanted for the railway water supply, and £10,000 for interlocking at Southern Cross, Coolgardie, and Kalgoorlie stations, and providing 30 passing sidings on the Southern Cross-to-Coolgardie railway, which will be the best thing we can do until the line is duplicated. On the Northern line we propose to carry out

station improvements at Geraldton and erect new workshops. I think it will be admitted that these items are justifiable, and that it is necessary to spend the money which is asked for, upon them. No doubt hon. members felt somewhat nervous when we introduced the Loan Bill that was explained to the House in the speech of the Premier last night; but after the explanation which has been given, I think it will be recognised that these works should be carried out as quickly as will be consistent with economy, and that the sooner we enjoy these advantages the better our railways will pay, and the better the public will be pleased. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.]

*Electric Lighting of Stations, &c.*

I should like to mention the necessity for the electric lighting of our stations. It was evident to me, when I took up the control of the department, that a better system of lighting the principal stations was necessary, and the Government consider it essential to carry out this work. We have decided to light the Perth and Fremantle stations and the goods sheds by electricity. We shall use 48 arc lamps for the yards and sheds, and 600 incandescent lamps for the platforms and offices. We expect to get good results from this installation, which will cost, with buildings, about £11,000. In the report of the speech made by Mr. Eddy, the Chief Commissioner of the New South Wales railways—and I like to quote Mr. Eddy, because he is admitted to be an able manager—at the International Railway Congress to which I have alluded, I find he referred to this subject of electric lighting in these words: "There is one other point that I think deserves most serious consideration, that is the better lighting of all yards. Progress has been made of late years in that direction, but still I think a great deal more remains to be done in the interests of the companies, both from an economical standpoint and also with regard to the safety of the men. In all the important yards that have come under the control of my commission, we have provided electric light, and it has facilitated the work enormously, and I am very glad to say that we have few accidents now, compared with formerly." Having quoted that, I say it is our desire

to prevent accidents, and our desire also to expedite the work of the railway department, which has to deal with a very large traffic, and by-and-by I hope we shall be able to provide electric lighting for the jetty at Fremantle, also for our yards at Perth, and for all the crossings in Perth.

*Increase of Rolling Stock.*

There is another question that will be of interest to members and to the country, and that is the question of rolling stock. We have taken large strides to anticipate the future, as far as rolling stock is concerned, and I certainly do not expect to see a repetition of the troubles which have overtaken us during the past year. I want to read a return, which you will find afterwards in my report, to show the great advance we have made in regard to rolling stock. On the 31st December, 1890, we had in hand 22 locomotives, 28 passenger carriages, and 285 waggons. In June, 1895, the rolling stock had increased to 49 locomotives, 75 passenger carriages, and 1,459 waggons, equivalent in number to four-wheel vehicles 1,538. In June last, that is three months ago, we had 74 locomotives, 102 passenger trucks, and 2,360 waggons, equivalent in number to four-wheel vehicles 2,589. To-day, the 30th September, we have in this colony 91 locomotives, 114 passenger carriages, and 2,868 waggons, equivalent to 3,355 four-wheel waggons; with a total seating capacity in carriages of 4,619, and a total carrying capacity in waggons of 19,639 tons. I think these figures show we are certainly making headway. Although I have spoken only of the rolling stock actually in the colony at the present time, yet we have ordered or are ordering rolling stock which will give us, on the 30th September in next year, 214 locomotives, 184 passenger carriages, 4,265 waggons and brake-vans, equivalent to 5,536 four-wheel vehicles, with a total seating capacity in carriages of 7,679, and a total carrying capacity in waggons of 32,674. I think we are anticipating the future, and I hope hon. members will be satisfied that the Government are endeavouring to do the best they can in the interests of the country. I think the figures I have quoted show a remarkable result—remarkable

progress, such as has seldom been shown in any other country. We have proved that we are endeavouring to meet the demands made upon us.

*The Block at Fremantle Removed.*

There is one thing upon which I should like to digress a little, deeming it to be the right time to mention the position of our railways with reference to the large imports at Fremantle, and that is that the trouble in getting away the goods imported into Fremantle is a trouble existing no longer. It may perhaps be thought this is a bold statement to make, but it can be borne out by the facts. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: The facts are against you.] I am here to-night to say that the block of goods at Fremantle does not now exist. I have it from my officers, and particularly from the General Traffic Manager of the railways, that every steamer in the port of Fremantle to-night is berthed at the jetty. I think that is sufficient proof that we have overtaken the demand upon us. I refer to this for the reason that a telegram received a few days ago from London stated that, if the block of goods continued at Fremantle, it would be necessary to increase freights 50 per cent. I knew that meant inconvenience and loss to the merchants of this country first, and to the consumers afterwards, and I thought it was our duty to prevent it. We have prevented it, and have been able to wire home to say that vessels will not be unnecessarily delayed unloading at the port of Fremantle. The press of the Eastern colonies, in commenting upon my action, has described it as making warehouses of the ships at Fremantle. I would like to say that I am here to stand or fall by my action, which I took after consulting the officers of my department. We had no desire to make warehouses of the ships, but we considered that it was expedient to do so; and, had it not been done, I have not the slightest doubt that a block would have occurred that would have far exceeded the block of six months ago. At Capetown, owing to the development of the Transvaal gold-fields, as a newspaper which I have had the good fortune to see shows, there has been a similar condition of things to that which lately occurred at Fremantle. The subject has been before the Parliament at Cape Town, and to

show that my action in dealing with the shipping at Fremantle is confirmed by the precedent under similar conditions in South Africa, I will quote an extract from the Cape Press, which reads:—  
 “Mr. Middleburgh, General Manager of the Netherland Railway Company, states in his report that the trade on Cape Railways was as follows:—To the Rand from Cape Town, 75 %; from Natal, 15 %; from Delagoa Bay, 10 %.  
 “This 75 % soon caused a block on the Cape route, which arose from the inability of the Railway Company at Johannesburg to distribute the goods on their arrival there. Thus 1,400 to 1,500 trucks daily blocked the line between the Vaal and Johannesburg.  
 “He mentioned in his wire to the Commissioner of Railways of the Cape: “Your esteemed wire shows clearly that there is no delay north of the Vaal River. If you block up the stations to the south, without regard to what we can receive, the fault is not ours.’ Late experience in Cape ports shows that if more ships arrive, the cargo of which cannot be landed, they have to wait, and if port merchants offer more goods than can be carried, they have to wait likewise; and so you did in Johannesburg when the tonnage was one-fourth of what it is now.” Now I think I have shown that the very same difficulty which occurred at Fremantle was experienced at Cape Town, and that it was dealt with in the same way that we have dealt with the block at Fremantle. The result is, as I have said, that a block does not exist at Fremantle to-day. I may mention that a gentleman from one of the other colonies, who is largely connected with shipping interests, called on me yesterday and said the state of things existing at Fremantle was far better than he had expected to find it, and that he did not consider any block existed there. There have been other expressions of opinion of the same tenor, upon this subject; and with the large additions we are making to our rolling stock, the shipping will be placed in a better position for discharging than it has ever been in before. We shall shortly be able to provide for and keep ahead of the traffic, and the longer we go on, the better we shall be able to deal with the import trade.

MR. LOTON: Have you wired to the Eastern colonies, so that rates may be cut down?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows, from his own experience in business, that merchants are very quick to take advantage of any opportunity to raise rates or reduce them, and you may be sure they will be quick to take action on this occasion.

MR. LOTON: Have the Government advised the Eastern colonies?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We will do that.

MR. MOSS: They are landing all the goods at Albany.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am glad the hon. member for North Fremantle has referred to that. I certainly do not wish to prevent the Great Southern Railway Company from making a little harvest, while they have an opportunity; but hon. members will see that a block must soon occur at Albany, unless the railway company get more engines and rolling stock there. I do not remember the exact figures, but it has been pointed out that the arrivals at Albany are only about 4,000 tons per month. No doubt, the people of Albany think it a great thing for their port that some of the steamers should be unloading there; but if one of the large steamers, like the Port Hunter, carrying 5,000 tons of cargo, discharged that quantity of cargo at Albany, in addition to other vessels, what would be the result? We have, between the 1st and 21st of September, dealt with 19,680 tons of cargo at the Fremantle pier—that is, at the rate of 6,560 tons per week, equal to 341,000 tons for the year; and when we remember that during seven months of last year we took, over the Fremantle pier 80,000 tons of cargo, and that for the corresponding months of this year we took 164,000 tons of cargo, I think hon. members will begin to see that, when we are called upon to deal with such large quantities as are now being landed, our trade is expanding immensely. The committee should remember that, as we are not standing still at any time, our resources and capacity for dealing with cargo have had to grow from month to month, as the figures I have quoted show. When I was told, six weeks ago, that there

were 60,000 tons of cargo awaiting discharge at Fremantle, I did not dispute the statement, as I did not know exactly what quantity there might be in the ships, but I doubted its accuracy. Since then, the ships have been discharged, and we have from them had to handle only 40,000 tons; therefore, what has become of the other 20,000 tons? Either the statement was exaggerated, or the other 20,000 tons must have gone to the bottom. I do not know that there is any necessity to deal further with the Fremantle trouble, except to say that the Government quite recognise the difficulties under which the merchants and the shippers have lately laboured at the port of Fremantle. It is the object of the Government, and of myself in particular, to remove those difficulties, and I hope Parliament and the country will give us credit for doing our best. There is one thing I wish to point out, and that is that it knocks the heart out of the officers of the Railway Department, if they get no encouragement when they are strenuously exerting themselves to move the cargo and serve the interests of the public. It would be some encouragement if the people showed that they appreciated these efforts, and recognised that the men were doing their best, and that the Government were doing their best. I do not suppose the officers of my department want any undue praise, but they do want a little recognition.

*Increasing the Facilities at Fremantle.*

As an example of what is being done to improve the shipping facilities of the port of Fremantle, I may mention that we hope to have two additional berths at the pier ready for use in six weeks. I have seen the contractor for this work, and he has promised that, if we keep him going with timber, the berths will be ready in that time. We have also commenced, within the river, a jetty on the north mole. The jetty is to be 1,000 feet long; it is well under way, and the contractor has promised to let us have it for use by the middle of February. We have also, at the suggestion of the recent deputation from Fremantle, which helped me considerably with their suggestions, commenced the permanent quay within the river, and instructions have been given for a jetty on the river side of the



south mole. I want the committee to see that, although the department has been condemned for inactivity and want of progress, it is carrying on its work as quickly as possible. I may say that what has been done at Fremantle, for providing increased facilities, really eclipses everything else in connection with the work of the Railway Department. Mr. McDonald, the executive engineer at Fremantle, gave me a promise that he would carry out his portion of the quay at the south mole, to which I have just alluded, and that in three months he will provide 200 feet length of pier, 60 feet wide, giving 12 feet draught of water, and I may say he will do it well within the time. Within five months from now, there will be 500 feet of permanent quay, and in twelve months there will be berthage accommodation of 1,000 feet, with twenty feet of water. I think this is pretty smart work for a department like ours, which has been so often described as "slow." I say "slow," because the public may think it is slow. Probably it is a good thing we do not go too fast, for the reason that the country is growing so quickly, because, if we went too fast, we might have to alter some of the works before they were completed. With regard to Fremantle, I have wanted an opportunity to say a word as to what we are doing there, because that is a subject which has been spoken of so much, and it is necessary the outside world should know we are in a position now to overcome all the difficulties. The delay in the preparation of the annual reports is somewhat inconvenient, on account of the two departments, Railways and Works, being so closely connected. The statement I am now making is one of works, but it is very closely connected with the railways, and I can scarcely divide them, for if I leave railways and go into works, I have at the same time also to go back to the railways in order to show what the Works Department have done.

*Increase of Railway Staff and the Pay.*

Going back to the railway system, we find that our progress in the increase of staff has been very great. On the 30th June, 1894, we were employing 440 men in the locomotive branch, and on the same day of this year the staff had in-

creased to 790. Similarly, in the traffic branch on June 30th, 1894, we were employing 169 men, while on the same day this year we had 462 men in that department. In the permanent way branch, the men employed on the 30th June, 1894, numbered 223, while on the same day this year that staff had increased to 1,000. Adding these figures together, I find that on 30th June of this year we were employing on our railways the small army of 2,252 men. The member for West Perth evidently takes an interest in the welfare of our railway employees, and a little time ago he made a statement in this House in which he suggested that, while we were dealing liberally with the superior officers, we were not so liberal with the men. I wish to say he was mistaken when he made those remarks, for I consider we have dealt fairly with the men who have to bear the heat and burden of the day. Station masters under the old rate received—first-class officers £230 to £250, while the present rate for them is £275 to £350; second-class station masters received under the old rate £190 to £210, while now they receive £210 to £250; fourth-class station masters received £120 to £140, while now they get £140 to £160. The guards under the old rate received 7s. to 9s. per day, while now they receive 8s. 6d. to 11s. Head porters under the old rate got 7s. to 10s. per day, while under the new rate they get 8s. 6d. to 10s.; second-class porters, those who have to work their way up, used to get 6s. to 6s. 6d. a day, and we still start them at 6s., but if a man proves himself competent he is able to rise to as high as 8s. per day. The pay of shunters used to be 6s. to 6s. 6d., but now it is 7s. to 9s.; while engine-drivers are paid 10s. to 13s. a day, as against 10s. to 12s. under the old rate. These increases have gone right throughout the service. The promotions, I may say, are now in the hands of those who have the control of the department, and it is upon their recommendations that these increases are made. Unless a man is deserving and proves himself worthy, he will not get the full advantage afforded by the new table of wages. I mention these figures because, some six months ago, we had a great difficulty in getting men to take up this work. We had men

coming on to-day and clearing out in three or four days or perhaps a week, for the reason that they could get something better to do. The result of this unsatisfactory state of affairs was that we had a very indifferent staff, and we came to the conclusion that, unless we increased the rate of pay, we would be unable to retain men for any length of time, with the usual consequences of many cases of negligence, inattention to passengers, carelessness and insolence, all of which at one time were rife. The men were paid low wages, and therefore did not value their positions. The result of the increase of wages is very satisfactory. I am not able to speak more fully on this matter because I have not had an opportunity of travelling all over the railway system; but, from what I have heard from the public who use the railways, it seems that they appreciate the change which has taken place. I hope also that the improvements which have been made in regard to wages have been appreciated by the men, and that now they will value their positions, and that the result will be a better service than in the past. The figures I have quoted show we are not unmindful of the men in our employment. I do not think the men should be paid an exorbitant rate of wages, but that they should receive wages commensurate with their usefulness and ability, and sufficient to form an encouragement for the men to stay with us.

#### *Future Earnings and Rates.*

There are one or two points I would like to make with regard to the future. It will be remembered I pointed out that our revenue this year far exceeded that of last year. I want to mention, on this point, that there was a difference between the figures shown by the Treasury and the figures shown by the department, on account of large amounts of credit outstandings, which could not be collected within a few days, and which had to be shown in the following year among the amounts afterwards received. In the railway balances, we took credit for these amounts of revenue earned. The total revenue for the current year is estimated at £734,000, and the expenditure at £474,000; or a percentage of 64·57 of net earnings. That is a high percentage for working the railways, but I am sure

our estimate of revenue is well within the mark. The Colonial Treasurer, as a rule, has under-estimated the railway revenue in past years; and I fancy we have, in our railway estimates for this year, placed the figures well under what will really be realised. If so, we shall have so much the better result. If we had not agreed to assimilate the rates of traffic charged on the goldfields lines, with those charged on lines in other parts of the colony, we should have been able to take credit for £120,000 more revenue this year. This is a very considerable loss; and, but for that, we could have set down the estimated revenue at £850,000 instead of £734,000. It was, no doubt, the right thing to do, to assimilate these rates, because after all so much of the welfare of the colony depends upon the development of the goldfields. We are doing right, I think, in assisting mine owners to convey their machinery to the fields at a moderate cost. There is another thing to say, and it is that we hope to take over the portion of the railway from Boorabbin to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie by the 31st December; and this accession of new railway will, no doubt, give us further income, and at the same time prove of great assistance to the goldfields, owing to the coming into force of the Government rates right through to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. This new section of line should greatly swell the revenue, and I am, therefore, confident that our estimate of revenue from the railways for the present year will be well below the mark. However, it is well to be on the safe side.

#### *Works Department, and Cases of Urgency.*

I have no doubt hon. members would like to know something about the management of the Works Department. It will be understood that we would be quite powerless to carry out any of the improvements we have made on the railways, without the help of the Works Department. I had hoped to be able to place the report of the Works Department on the table of the House before this date, but I will do so to-night. The matters I shall now refer to will be dealt with in that report. The reason why the works report is delayed is that it deals with the financial year and not the calendar year, and the report cannot be

completed until some time after the books of the department are closed for the year. The preparation of the Estimates entailed a great deal of work, and occupied a great deal of time; consequently, the department has been working at a high pressure to get out the report, which is so necessary for the information of members. There is an impression that we have failed to carry out the programme of works approved by Parliament, but that impression is not borne out by the figures; for Parliament voted for expenditure in the year 1896 a total of £584,000, while the department has actually expended £638,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How much of that was not authorised?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is a little question I am not going into just now. It will be seen we expended £54,000 in excess of the programme; and, in addition to this great amount of work, we have made preliminary arrangements for designing a great number of works which we hope to induce Parliament to approve. I hope that by next year we shall be able to give a better account of ourselves by showing a clean sheet. There is one thing I may say, that although we have dealt with some works not authorised by Parliament, and have dealt with them perhaps in preference to other works which had been authorised, yet those unauthorised works have been very important and urgent, and we have had to do them sometimes under great pressure, so as to keep pace with urgent requirements. At the same time, we have not lost sight of the works authorised, and most of them will be well in hand at an early date, and in fact many of them are in hand now and some completed. If I could have produced a report on the Works Department up to the end of September instead of to the end of June last, the record of the department would have looked much more satisfactory.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Have you not made mistakes as to the relative importance of the works?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We do not admit anything in that way, but we do say we are doing our best for the country.

#### *Expenditure on Public Works.*

I wish to point out that, in the Works Estimates for this year, we have provided for a gross expenditure of £1,289,209, which is a very big increase over the expenditure of last year. This gross expenditure is made up of £650,000 from loan funds and £638,000 from revenue. This big item to be spent out of current revenue is, I think, one of the best things we could have done. The Premier pointed out to you last night that a good deal of Government money has been spent on works which would ordinarily be carried out with loan money. Of the total expenditure last year £225,000 was for rolling stock, rails, and fastenings, the whole of which was paid practically to manufacturers in England, but the balance of £425,708 was expended within the colony. I want to show that the great prosperity of the past year was not attributable to any undue expenditure of borrowed money, for the reason that we did not expend in that year so much borrowed money as we expended in the preceding year. Of the total amount expended from loans, no less than £409,121 was expended on railways and tramways, and the balance was spent on ordinary works. The total amount expended from loans to June 30, 1896, was £3,927,486, while the total population on the same date was 122,420, which makes the actual loan expenditure to have been at the rate of £32 ls. 8d. per head. I want also to show what a great deal we have done out of Consolidated Revenue. We have expended out of Consolidated Revenue the large amount of £638,501, which is greatly in excess of similar expenditure in any previous year. The expenditure out of Consolidated Revenue from 1892 to 1895 was £315,899; so that more than double that amount was expended from the same source in 1895-6. We have, therefore, the singular fact that in 1895-6 we expended from Consolidated Revenue more than double the amount expended from the same source in the preceding three years. We have a big thing before us in this department, for, according to these estimates, with which I think the House will be satisfied, we have to expend, on public works, £970,164, or nearly a million sterling. That amount shows how the department is growing. It shows the volume of busi-

ness transacted through the department when I mention that indents were prepared last year to the value of £870,000. These figures prove we are doing a great deal of good work ; and I would also like to point out that many of the causes of complaint which have been pointed out by members from time to time, as to apathy shown by the department, will, I hope, cease to exist.

#### *Reorganisation of Departments.*

Rome was not built in a day, neither can these big departments be reorganised in a day. There is room for reorganisation in various branches of the departments, and that reorganisation will take place in due course ; but it is no use acting in haste and repenting at leisure, and perhaps the better plan is to gradually improve the departments. I may say the enormous increase in the public works has necessitated an increase in the staff by 156 men during the past year. Owing to this great increase of work, it has been found necessary to establish branches of the engineering department under the Engineer-in-Chief. During the last six months, we have adopted the system of placing each branch under an executive engineer, who is responsible to the Engineer-in-Chief ; and these executive engineers will take a great deal of work and responsibility off the shoulders of the Engineer-in-Chief. These branches are : Railway Construction ; Goldfields Water Supply ; Roads and Bridges ; Water Supply and Sewerage ; Harbours and Rivers, excepting Fremantle ; Engineering Surveys ; Architectural. The Fremantle harbour works also have been placed under the charge of an executive officer. I have given, in the annual report, a detailed list of the officers appointed to the different positions, and this report will be seen by hon. members. We have made the Architectural division into a branch. We have also endeavoured to improve, as far as possible, the working of all these branches by placing them, as I have already said, under executive heads, and in this way we shall arrive, I think, at a satisfactory solution of some of the difficulties with which we have had to contend. We propose to continue for a time the present arrangement by which the Engineer-in-Chief is head

of the railways. The General Traffic Manager, Mr. Davies, will retain his present position. As to the Locomotive Superintendent, I may say that for some time we have had an acting Superintendent, Mr. Campbell, and it is proposed to make him permanent Locomotive Superintendent, the present officer, Mr. Mather, retiring on a pension. Mr. Dartnall has, during the year, taken up the position of Engineer of Existing Lines, and we have also appointed an Electrical Engineer. We have appointed a Stores Manager, who will be able to see that the stores do not unduly accumulate. I have no complaint whatever to make against the Government Storekeeper, for I think him an estimable officer ; but, by having a Stores Manager of our own, we shall be better able to handle our stocks. As to the Accountant's branch of the railways, it is working now very satisfactorily, and the result will be proved by the returns laid upon the table of the House. With regard to the executive engineers, they all have been selected with a view to placing the ablest men in the best positions. Under this new system, the Works and Railways should make progress in the future, and I hope this reform will meet with the approval of the House and also of the country. There is one subject hon. members no doubt would like to hear something about, and that is the proposed General Manager of Railways. The matter will, no doubt, come up when the Estimates are considered ; but it is just as well to hear what the Government intend doing in that respect. The Government do not intend to alter the present state of things yet. They will give a little time for the railways to further develop ; and, at any rate, the present system will continue a little longer. The arrangement at present is that the Engineer-in-Chief is acting General Manager of Railways, and the general management of the traffic is in the hands of Mr. Davies. This, as I have said, will be continued for some little time, for the reason that we are anxious to do justice to all parties, and for the further reason that we desire, before making any change, to see the railways a little further advanced. To make these changes now would not, I think, be altogether in the interests of the department.

*Efforts of Principal Officers.*

I would like to say a few words here with regard to those officers who have so ably assisted me during the last six months. As to the Engineer-in-Chief, we all know his capacity for work and his ability. He has done a very great deal of good for this colony, especially in connection with the Fremantle harbour works and other important matters, and I must place on record my appreciation of the estimable services he has rendered to the department and to the Government throughout. Not only has he assisted my own department, but he has also been ever ready to give advice with regard to other matters, whenever his advice has been sought by the Government. With regard to the General Traffic Manager, who was spoken of by my predecessor as being an able and energetic officer, I may say he is still proving himself worthy of the position he holds; and that no doubt, through his energy and ability and his excellent management, a good deal of the satisfactory results obtained from our railways is attributable. He has done a great deal to improve the railways, and he has continued, I may say, to work most loyally with me during the time I have been in office. As you know, it is not always easy for an officer to carry on his work with a new Commissioner who has to gain his railway experience. I have received very great assistance from the General Traffic Manager, and I may also say that almost every officer in the traffic branch has done his best. The Engineer for Existing Lines, Mr. Dartnall, has given great assistance, he and his officers having worked night and day to carry out the wishes of the Government, and their efforts have shown most satisfactory results. The Locomotive Superintendent at Fremantle, Mr. Campbell, also has done a great deal of work under serious difficulties. He has had a block there on his own account—difficulties in dealing with the large number of packages, owing to the smallness of the locomotive yards, and under these conditions he has done wonders; every man working under him seems to have joined in the effort to turn out the work as speedily as possible, and they have succeeded admirably. I should not like to omit reference to the Piermaster

at Fremantle, for the reason that he took up the work when the block was at its worst. He has worked like a Trojan, and the results of his labours are excellent. It is very pleasing to me to mention these men, for the reason that they have had to carry out their duties under trying circumstances, and at a time when nothing but complaints were coming from the public. In fact, the officers of both departments, Railways and Works, have done their best to keep pace with the work. The Under Secretaries have had a great deal of work cast upon them, and they have done it most loyally and faithfully. There is no doubt room for improvement in some branches, and that improvement will be made later on. The Accountant's branch has now made fair way to becoming thoroughly efficient, and I hope we shall not now have those periodical allusions to this branch that were made to it in the estimable reports of the Auditor General. At the same time, I could admire the Auditor General's report very much more if these allusions to the Works Department and the Accountant's branch were absent. I thank hon. members for having listened to me so attentively during the time I have been speaking; and though there are several other things I would like to have mentioned, I will have an opportunity later. I want the House to rest assured that we are only too anxious to give ventilation to any subject that may be brought up, and to answer any inquiries in connection with these departments; and I think I shall be able in every instance to make satisfactory replies to those hon. members who are desirous of obtaining information from me. As we have a very long list of estimates to deal with, and as no doubt hon. members would like some little time to look into them, if it is desired to postpone the consideration until to-morrow, I will not object; but if members wish to proceed, I shall be glad to go on.

*Deep Boring at Coolgardie.*

There is one other thing, in connection with public works, which I had almost forgotten to mention. There is a piece of stone on the table which has come from Coolgardie, having been taken from the bore there at a depth of 189ft. That piece of stone is an evidence of the great

difficulties we have to contend with in boring for water there, as we are down 225ft. and in solid granite. At the time I visited the goldfields, the boring was at the rate of only 3ft. a day; and if we are to bore 3,000ft., those in charge of the diamond drill will have a very nice long spell for the next three or four years; but, from the opinion of the geologists, there is nothing for us to do but to continue boring until the bottom falls out.

#### *Conclusion.*

I thank you for your very patient hearing of a probably dry subject, because figures are not always as interesting as they might be; but I think I have placed before you a statement in connection with our railways and public works which should reassure the country, and show we are not in that state of chaos or incapacity which the public sometimes are led to believe we are. We hope to prove to the public, as time goes on, that the Government fully recognise the necessity for dealing with the public works and railways of this colony upon a basis which must, I think, eventually result in satisfaction to Parliament and the country.

#### *Discussion.*

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the admirable report they had listened to justified the action he took to defer consideration of these estimates until the House received a general statement with the annual reports. It would be well now to report progress, until members had time to master the subject and study the reports. He moved that progress be reported, and leave asked to sit again.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. ILLINGWORTH further said that if the committee was prepared to go on, he was willing; but he asked the Government to consent to report progress before entering on the consideration of the public works. He congratulated the Government, and especially the Commissioner of Railways, on the marvellous success of the past year. He had said before that, though there might be a difference of opinion as to the management of the railways on individual items, yet the general results showed that these were the best managed railways in Aus-

tralia; for, taking the railways as a whole, they were well managed indeed. The financial result, however, had been obtained at the cost of complete efficiency. He did not make these remarks by way of complaint, but to show that the result could have been obtained only by defective construction and by inefficiency in detail and in the means of working. While circumstances in the past had possibly justified that state of things, yet the time had come when that must cease, and when the railways must be put into efficient condition. He was pleased that the Government and the department were looking forward in that direction. When they were running only a few trains between Perth and Fremantle, and Perth and Guildford, they could get along with a single line of rails and with a clumsy system of signals; but, with the increased traffic, it was impossible to go on longer in that way. The railways must be placed in a better condition as to rolling stock and the state of the lines, as well as the conveniences required by the public, whatever might be the cost; and one effect of that increased efficiency would necessarily be to reduce the good financial balance of which they had heard that night. In mentioning these points, he did so in no carping spirit, but to show that these matters must be considered. The best of management lay between 55 and 65 per cent. of revenue to working expenses, and probably the Commissioner's estimate would be realised when he said he could keep inside of 65. They had great reason to be gratified with the result; but he had hoped to see a change in the management, and that the connection which had hitherto existed between the Engineer-in-Chief and the management of the railways would have ceased. The time had come when the Railway Department ought to be placed in the hands of a permanent head. The present General Traffic Manager might be perfectly competent for that position, though he (Mr. Illingworth) was not sufficiently conversant with that officer's abilities to say, definitely; but, from what he knew, he should be disposed to travel in that direction. Practically, whether the Traffic Manager was capable or not, he had to do the work; and why should he be kept back from appointment to a position which his

ability and the responsibilities resting upon him entitled him to fill? If he was not capable for that high position, then he was not capable for the position in which it was proposed to keep him. He (Mr. Illingworth) had no desire to enter on the subject of public works then, but he wanted to ask if it were correct that a committee or board was appointed a little while ago, consisting of Mr. Quirk, a commercial traveller for a certain engineering firm in England, and two officers of the department, for the purpose of giving certain orders for the railway department. He wanted to know at whose recommendation the Government permitted a commercial traveller, who came to this colony to pursue the business of his firm, to be paid to go on a committee of recommendation to the Government, and to be paid so much per day to order his own firm's goods.

THE PREMIER: That is not so.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he had heard from the best authorities, from most respectable merchants in the city, that such was a fact. Whether true or false, the impression was abroad in the city that injustice had been done; and, in the interests of the department, he wanted to give the Government and the Minister particularly, an opportunity for either explaining or denying these statements made by respectable merchants.

MR. A. FORREST: Give the names of them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the hon. member was a nice man to talk about giving names; but if he were to respond to the request, the hon. member would be mightily astonished.

MR. A. FORREST: You make charges, but won't give the names.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that was not the place to give names. For the information of the member for West Kimberley, he would say he laid the facts before the Minister, so that an answer might be given in the House; therefore he was taking no advantage of the Government. He knew that in Victoria there was a scandal in that particular direction, which rested on the department for many years, and the mere whisper of it was calculated to injure the department, the Government, and the country. For that reason, it was necessary the present matter should be brought

up. He was satisfied the Minister would be able to give some satisfactory explanation of the matter; but the bald statement in circulation was that the Government were paying or had paid a certain commercial traveller a certain sum per day—he thought the amount was £12 per day—and the effect of that was that this gentleman was placed in a position to advise the Government to order his own firm's goods. He happened to know, from his 25 years' knowledge of the hardware trade, that the goods represented by this gentleman were not the best for the Government to purchase. He asked the question for no other reason than that they might have a complete vindication from the Government, which he knew the House would get.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS said the hon. member had not taken any undue advantage of the Government, as he had mentioned, a few days ago, that he would probably bring the matter forward. He (the Commissioner) was glad the hon. member had done so, because it enabled the action of the Government to be placed in the true light. He admitted that Mr. Quirk was chosen as a mechanical engineer; that he was also the representative of the firm of Messrs. Fowler and Son, of Leeds, England, and that he was appointed a member of the committee of inquiry in connection with the fitting of the new Railway Workshops at the Midland Junction, for the purpose of making suggestions as to the placing of the machinery. He sat with the Commission for a period of 60 days; and having been recommended by the Locomotive Superintendent, Mr. Campbell, and by the Engineer for Harbour Works at Fremantle, Mr. McDonald, by whom he was considered the best qualified person to assist them in that particular work, his services and advice had been found very valuable in helping to prepare a report upon the Midland Junction workshops. The agreement was that he should be paid five guineas per day, and it was understood, when the agreement was made, that it would take some 14 days to carry out the work; but the work entailed more labour than had been expected, in connection with the preparation of designs and working drawings. As to Mr. Quirk having influenced Mr. Campbell or Mr. McDonald

in any way to recommend the ordering of any machinery from Mr. Quirk's firm, he (the Commissioner) was willing to place on the table a list showing the machinery ordered, and he now gave an unqualified denial to the statement that Mr. Quirk influenced the ordering of some £30,000 worth of machinery in connection with these workshops. The only two machines recommended to be purchased from Fowler and Son, of Leeds, were two small engines costing £640. It was said this gentleman was also representing Appleby Bros. and another firm; but Mr. Quirk had assured him he had no interest whatever in those firms. Mr. Quirk valued his services at a higher rate than five guineas per day, asking for ten guineas; but he received only five guineas.

THE PREMIER said he wished to state that he did not know anything about this matter until it was brought to his notice a day or two ago; but since then he had had an opportunity of looking at the work performed by the Locomotive Superintendent, the engineer for the Fremantle Harbour Works, and this gentleman, Mr. Quirk, and he must say they had done an immense amount of work in connection with these designs and drawings. He would like hon. members to be satisfied that the work had actually been done. The Director of Public Works had informed the House that the gentleman referred to was the agent for Messrs. Fowler, of Leeds; but that circumstance did not prevent Mr. Quirk from being an expert in this special work. He (the Premier) did not think the other two officers he had mentioned would have selected this gentleman for the work unless they knew he could give useful assistance.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Did they select him?

THE PREMIER: Yes; and the Engineer-in-Chief was glad to have an opportunity of obtaining the services of a gentleman who was said to have peculiar knowledge and experience with regard to the matter he was dealing with. As a rule, it was not wise that an agent of a firm should be engaged in such a way, but sometimes the Government had to employ such persons as were available. He did not think that, because this gentleman was employed to

assist the department in arranging these workshops, the machinery and tools, and the position they should occupy, that therefore this gentleman should expect the department was going to give his firm a lot of orders. If so, he was very much mistaken, for the orders had to go from the Engineer-in-Chief to the Minister, then through the Treasury, next to the Agent-General in London, and finally he referred them to a consulting engineer in London; so that, in passing through these various hands, the House might be sure that, if anything was wrong in connection with these orders, some one of the several persons through whose hands they passed would detect it. He was glad the Director of Public Works had been able to refute the statement made, and his (the Premier's) interjection that "there was nothing in it" was right, after all, and the hon. member for Nannine was wrong.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that in view of the fact that the Government were going to order £1,200,000 worth of rolling stock, the statement in circulation at the time in Perth and Fremantle could not but be damaging amongst the people from whom the country was going to raise the loan. The statement had been made; he had seen it in print; and he had sent the statement made to him in writing to the reporters in the gallery. That statement had been made to him calmly, and he had not exaggerated it at all. What he had said in the House was said in the interest of the country as a whole, and of the department in particular. He had spoken in praise of the Railway Department, and had always taken this position, that while there had been and always would be minor differences, yet the department as a whole—and he said it calmly, having regard to the limited resources and difficulties under which it had laboured—was the best managed railway department in the Australian colonies. He had travelled in England over railways that had the best reputation in the world, and yet there he could find out serious deficiencies. This department had to deal with a daily increasing business, with railways that were spreading out 500 miles at a time; therefore it was to be expected that the people should be reasonable in reference to any complaint they might



have against the department. He had often been much annoyed at the unreasonable demands which some people made on the department. He was very much pleased to be able to see the efforts the Government were making in reference to the block at Fremantle, and the statement made by the Commissioner of Railways in regard to the new wharves would be hailed with great satisfaction by the trading community. It was not possible to estimate in figures the tremendous loss that had fallen on the merchants and shipowners, and the people generally, in connection with the delays at Fremantle, caused by want of sufficient facilities for removing goods. In some things the Government were to blame; but the agitation which took place some time ago had had its effect, and the Government had started to do things which they ought to have done before, but for doing which, even though late, the people ought to be grateful. If the Premier's prognostication was correct, that they were going to have a constantly increasing number of people coming into the colony, then the railway department would get into the same difficult position again. He felt every pleasure and satisfaction in offering his congratulations to the Government and the Minister in charge of this department, for the results which were shown in the statement placed before the House; and he was satisfied the House would have made a very grave mistake if they had gone on with the Railways and Works Estimates and dealt with them, without the valuable report which they had now received from the Minister.

On the motion of MR. RANDELL, progress was reported, and leave given to sit again.

#### ANNUAL REPORTS OF DEPARTMENTS.

The Commissioner of Railways, by leave, laid on the table the Report of the Department of Public Works, for the year 1895-6, also the Report on the Working of the Government Railways for 1895-6.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.45 p.m. until next day.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 1st October, 1896.

Criminal Evidence Bill: second reading—Statutory Declarations Bill: committee—Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill: second reading; adjourned debate—Western Australian Bank Incorporation Bill: third reading—Perth Park Streets or Roads Closure Bill: second reading; committee—Judges' Pensions Bill: first reading—Loan Bill (£3,500,000) 1896: first reading—Supply Bill (No. 2): second reading; committee; third reading—Metropolitan Water Works Bill: second reading; committee; third reading—Exportation of Guano: prohibition of; Legislative Assembly's amendment—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

### CRIMINAL EVIDENCE BILL.

#### SECOND READING.

THE HON. R. S. HAYNES: At present in all cases of a criminal nature no defendant is a competent or compellable witness, nor is the wife or husband of such person competent to give evidence. Then a person giving evidence is not bound to answer any question which may tend to incriminate himself, and by this Bill it is proposed that he shall answer any question which is put to him. With this portion of the Bill I do not entirely agree, and I consider that it should be struck out. Clause 2 of the Bill, however, contains, I think, a very necessary provision. It provides that persons who are charged before justices with punishable offences shall be competent and compellable witnesses, and also that the wives or husbands of such persons shall be competent to give evidence. With the exception of the words "wives or husbands" I should like to see this clause adopted. I have had considerable experience in proceedings of a summary nature, and I have known justices to decide that a person may give evidence in a case where the law does not permit such, and I have known other cases where it has been decided, contrary to the law, that a person could not give evidence. This Bill will set that matter at rest. I may say that my experience has chiefly been in New South Wales, where both magistrates and the legal profession are unanimous that a Bill of this kind is a step in the right direction. Take the case of a man