

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th July, 1901.

Motion (urgency): Railway Workers' Strike Threatened; general Debate on the Crisis—Question: Public Works, Appointment of Mr. Atkins—Question: Coolgardie-Kalgoorlie Railway, Duplication—Question: Assembly Benches, comfort wanted—Question: School of Mines at Coolgardie—Question: Live Stock and Frozen Meat, Inspectors—Question: Apples Importation, Federal conditions—Address-in-reply, debate resumed, fourth day, adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

MOTION (URGENCY) — RAILWAY WORKERS' STRIKE THREATENED.

GENERAL DEBATE ON THE CRISIS.

MR. R. HASTIE (Kanowna): I wish to call the attention of the House to a matter of urgent and great public importance, and I shall finish by moving the adjournment of the House. The subject to which I call attention is that of the impending strike. Almost every member present understands the exact position of affairs, namely that probably at 11 or 12 o'clock to-night communication by railway between the different parts of this State will be stopped. This matter is one that I feel sure concerns every one of us, and to say it is to be regretted is to use very mild language indeed. The unfortunate thing is that no one has yet suggested a method by which we may avoid the inevitable consequences. But there is always a possibility that even at the last moment the consequences to be anticipated may be averted. That being the case, I would urge strongly that we should see whether we cannot devise some means to avert these consequences, even at the last moment. First, I would say with reference to the progress of the trouble, that it is not a new matter. Those who are about to strike are men who, for a very long time, have believed that they have a substantial grievance; and almost every man who knows that grievance believes that it ought to be remedied. Several times the men have received fair promises of having their grievance remedied, but they have not yet succeeded in obtaining the remedy. Nothing of a definite nature was done, so far

as I am aware, until the accession of the present Government, when those men again presented their grievance, and promises were made that the grievance would almost immediately be remedied. But those men felt that they were in a particularly strong position, and believed it was better for them to take advantage of their strong position and to use whatever means lay in their power to enable them to get their increase in wages. The first movement in the matter was not a direct one. There was a body of workmen in Fremantle called port labourers, who were very desirous also of getting a substantial advance. The probabilities were that if they had not gone on strike, the matter would have been settled; they would have gone to work and would have been content to wait for the classification scheme. But the great body of the railway workers urged these men to stand out also and maintain their position. Subsequent developments I shall explain. While the matter was being considered, an offer was made that the case of these men should be submitted to an impartial board. Most of us believed that this was the best possible way to get the grievance remedied. The railway workers as a body, however, seemed to be of a different opinion. No compromise has been accepted, and so we are in this position, that in all probability railway communication with other parts of Western Australia will be stopped. I shall not make any further remarks on the history of the case. I only wish to point out clearly what has been done by myself and by those who sit on this bench beside me. When we heard of the position of affairs we offered advice. Everyone of us did his best to see that those men should go a proper way to get their grievances remedied, and also we were very careful to see that if any arrangement were made by the men on strike, or those about to strike, no other difficulty should occur in the meantime if it could possibly be avoided. Up to the present moment we have maintained that attitude. We have been sent here as Labour members, and we consider it our duty to take an interest in all matters concerning Labour which may happen to arise throughout the State. We have tried our best to settle affairs, but so far we have been utterly unsuccessful. Now, I

wish to point this out clearly—our duty here as Labour members is to use our utmost endeavours to see that no labouring section of the population is put into a worse position—to see that its position may be generally bettered, if it is possible. It is our opinion that all men employed by the State should be entitled to at least as good wages as are paid to men in similar positions outside the service of the State. We hold this so very strongly that we are desirous that reclassification may go on, not only in the railway service, but in every other part of the public service of the country, and that the reclassification should be completed at the earliest possible moment. On one point I feel quite sure every member of the House will agree with me—if communication be temporarily stopped between the different parts of the State, that cannot last. We must see that no section of the community is starved; we must see that communication of some kind does go on; and I feel quite certain that the great body of the people are behind us in this matter. We have especially to remember that this is a country of very great distances; there are hundreds of miles between this place and the eastern goldfields, and two or three hundred miles between the coast and the Murchison goldfields; and if railway communication be stopped, most people on those fields have absolutely no food supplies to fall back on. We wish particularly to avoid anything being done in that direction. And I will give another and a final reason. For years very many of us have been complaining that the civil servants seemed to rule this country. Railway employees are not usually classed as civil servants; however, on this occasion they practically fall in that category; and if the position were allowed that these people could enforce any particular demand, that example would be followed, and government by the country at large instead of by public servants would be rendered absolutely impossible. In conclusion, I ask the House to take this matter into very serious consideration and see if anything farther can be done to avert the impending calamity. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

MR. DAGLISH (Subiaco): I beg to second that motion, and in doing so I

should like to add to the remarks of the member for Kanowna, that this matter is one specially affecting the bench on which we are sitting. We recognise that we have in regard to an affair like this a responsibility which must be discharged, and that it is our duty to let not only this House, but also the men from one end of the country to the other who are concerned in the strike, understand fully and clearly whether our sympathies are with them or are altogether opposed to them in the move they propose to make. There can be no question that our sympathies are entirely with the men where they have a grievance. There can be no doubt in the minds of those who have investigated the condition of the railways, that many of the men are underpaid, and that many of the railway men have in the past worked unduly long hours. Their remuneration has been too small altogether for the work they have done. At the same time we recognise that this is a matter which could not be settled in a few minutes; we recognise that a very fair, and very good, and very satisfactory offer has been made to the men by the present Commissioner of Railways. The constitution of the board which was offered to the men could absolutely not be improved on in any way whatever. I say that looking at the matter from the position of an employee—I put myself for the time being in the position of an employee—if my salary or my status were in any way affected I could not desire a better system to conserve my interests than that of a board constituted as the board proposed would have been if the Minister's proposal had been accepted. I am absolutely disappointed that any body of men in the public service of this State should for a moment have dreamt of rejecting such a favourable offer as that board represented. I recognise then that the threatened strike ought to be, and I still hope it may be, averted by the good sense of the men themselves. I recognise that if a strike is brought about, it will be due to the fact that the case has not been fairly presented to the men themselves by their officials. I am quite satisfied that if the individual men themselves could be reached they would recognise the fairness of the proposal, if it were fairly stated to them. I know many of

the men who are affected ; some of them indeed are in my constituency ; and I am quite satisfied that if those men were properly approached and made by their officials to understand the terms offered to them, they would not for a moment dream of taking such a bad step as that of going on strike. We recognise here that it is our duty as persons representing labour to prevent a strike. We do not want to see strikes ; because we recognise that while they injure the employer of labour, while they injure capital, the injury they do to labour is even greater in the majority of cases. I personally recognise that this strike, if it occurs, may do far more harm than has ever been done by a strike in this country in the past ; for it may lead, if the traffic on the railways is suspended for any length of time, to the locking out of other employees in private employment ; and possibly the ultimate effect may be a reduction of wages in other lines of work, because some of the employees locked out may possibly be unable to get back into their old employment at the current rate of wages. On account of these far-reaching evils I wish to emphasise the fact that my colleagues and myself are absolutely opposed to the step that is proposed to be taken. We are opposed to it simply because, on the showing of the executive officers of the Railway Association, it is unreasonable to precipitate a strike at this stage. It is stated in to-day's paper by Mr. Guilfoyle that the proposed board could not deal with the matter in a short time. In justification of that we are told that the Railway Association itself took about four months to deal with the reclassification of employees, although this association knew fully the class of work being done all round. Yet the association, which itself could not deal with the question of classification in four months, which even at the expiration of that time had not completed it, has said that the Commissioner of Railways should be able in the short space of one month to draw up a thorough reclassification of the whole railway service. I contend that if this body of railway employees could not do the work of classification in four months, it is absurd to ask the Minister to do it in one month. The argument therefore that he should have done so, and the

strike that we are threatened with, simply mean that the Minister is to accept the classification *holus-bolus* without giving proper consideration to its details. He was therefore asked to allow himself to be dictated to by the association as a body. He would have forfeited the respect of this House, he would have forfeited I say, speaking as Labour member, my respect if he had allowed himself to accept the classification of any body of men without a thorough and proper examination. I trust that wiser counsels may yet prevail with the men. I trust that the allusions which have been made and which will be made to the matter in the course of the evening in this House, will have their due effect with the men to-morrow and restrain them from carrying out their threat ; and I think that their intelligence, their common sense and their sense of duty to the State of which they also form members, will induce them to refrain from following the beck of their leaders in this respect.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. J. Holmes) : It is indeed a cause of gratification to me to learn that my action has been indorsed from almost every seat in the House. I think that during the debate on the Address-in-reply nearly every member has referred to the unfortunate strike which is pending. We have now the Labour party in this House speaking on behalf of the labour party throughout the country, and we find that my action has been indorsed. I have always had this in view, that someone responsible must control that great earning and spending department, the railways. I contend that my action has been to conserve the interests of the State, and the interests of those whom I contend are the owners of the railway. We have a railway service which has cost some nine millions of money, which costs considerably upwards of a million a year to carry on, and which employs some six thousand railway servants ; and if any 30 casual hands can, if they think fit, throw down their tools and announce that they have the department cornered and mean to keep them there, then I maintain it is a position that is untenable, and I as the Commissioner of Railways cannot go on controlling the department. We have the admission of the secretary of the West Australian Government Railways

Association that it took his association four months to bring about a classification, and yet in the course of a week or two—during my first week in office, in fact—I have been rushed by this association, and terms that I could not consider fair were demanded almost at the point of the bayonet. I can join with my friend who has just spoken, the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), in the assertion that I would have lost my self-respect and the respect of this House had I given in to the unreasonable demands that were made. My colleagues, in selecting me as the Commissioner of Railways, were of opinion that I could control this department; and I venture to suggest that, given the opportunity, I can and will control the department. But if I am to be dictated to by a small unreasonable section of the community, then, as I said before, I am not prepared to go on, and I am sure no right-thinking person in this community would expect it. It is unfortunate that I should be the scapegoat, as it were, for the faults perhaps of some of those who preceded us. I do not wish to refer to the past, but I must say that my friend the member for Northam, Mr. Throssell, the late Premier, is in some way responsible for this unfortunate situation. About the time he retired from office, he told a section of the community, the fettleers, some 500 of them who sent in a petition, that they had proved their case to the hilt, and had he remained in office he certainly would have granted their desires. If he was satisfied of that, he should have given them what they were entitled to. Had I been seized of the facts, as he seems to have been, I should certainly have complied with the request. The matter came upon me almost at a moment's notice, and, not having the facts at hand, I could not give what the men desired; but the hon. member for Northam seems to have been seized of the position, and certainly if he was satisfied that the men were right, he should have given them what they asked, and not have played the game of politics as he seems to have done. This I may say is not the only difficulty I have to contend with; it is not the only legacy left by the late administration. There are many other difficulties of a similar nature with which I have had to contend. As

to justice being done to the men in the department, I can assure my friends, the Labour party, that justice will be shown to every individual. I told the General Manager when I first came into office that as far as I am concerned the book was closed as regards the past, and we were prepared to start off the scratch. I told him that when he was right I would support him, and when he was wrong he must put up with the consequences. I also told him I desired him to work the railways in order that they may pay working expenses and interest, and it was our desire that the men in the service should be paid equally to any other section of the community. As far as I was concerned I desired that this should be done, and intended that it should be. I think, as you know, for the last four years I have been a friend of the railway employees. I have advocated their cause in this House on many occasions, and I believe now that the men are satisfied they will receive justice at my hands. Although I say it myself, it is from men like me they can expect justice and success, rather than from the agitators who are leading them on. There was one matter which was referred to by two or three speakers in the House, namely that of civil servants referring to the actions of Ministers; and it is unfortunate that the General Manager at a banquet the other evening at Fremantle made reference to me as Minister. It has done me more harm than anything else during the strike, and I certainly hope all other Ministers will support my action in seeing that hereafter the heads of departments shall not as it were scratch the backs of Ministers. There are two constructions to be put upon the remarks of the General Manager. One section of the community contends that he is endeavouring to curry favour with me, and the other section contends that he is endeavouring to incite the men against me by setting up the fact that he and I are friends, consequently the men and I must be enemies. That is the danger from heads of departments entering into politics, and I have determined to put that down with a strong hand, as I have done in this instance. I have nothing to say farther, except that I cannot and do not think the House should accept any suggestions contrary

to the offer of compromise which we have made, and which has met with the approval of the best intelligence of the country ; and unless the men are prepared to accept that compromise, they must put up with the consequences.

MR. MOORHEAD : Is that offer still open ?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : It is open, and I have no intention of withdrawing what I consider a fair and reasonable offer. I believe the greater portion of the men will accept what is believed to be a just and generous way out of the difficulty.

MR. DOHERTY : Did they give you any reason for their objection to the board ?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : None.

MR. W. D. JOHNSON (Kalgoorlie) : I do not desire to dwell at any length on this subject, but I wish to put to the House clearly the position of the Labour members upon the question. As one who has taken a considerable part in regard to the grievances of the labour men, and who has been associated with many small strikes in connection with those grievances, I consider I know a little of the present trouble with the Railway Association. In all the troubles I have been connected with, not only of the railway employees but others, I have always first advocated arbitration. I have never advocated that the men should leave their work until I have interviewed the employers and asked them whether they were prepared to arbitrate on the question that had caused the grievance. In this case we find the employer, the Commissioner of Railways, agreeing to arbitration in its best form ; and consequently, to be consistent, I must accept that, and I say the men have no right to go out on strike at the present time. I mention this as a prominent Labour man of this State, who took an active part in getting the Government to officially recognise the Railway Associations. I consider these railway associations are necessary, and I do not wish the House to condemn these associations for the present action. I say it is not the wish of the association to come out on strike. They do not understand the position. Speaking as a representative of Kalgoorlie, I maintain that the members of the Railway Association

in Kalgoorlie do not understand the present position.

MR. MONGER : Are the Kalgoorlie men going to strike ?

MR. JOHNSON : I doubt it myself.

I wired to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* last evening, specially stating to the men that I did not think it was right for them to come out, and I strongly advised that they should remain at work pending a decision of this arbitration court. I have my doubts whether the men will take my advice or the advice of the secretary of the Railway Association, but I venture to think they will take mine. However, be that as it may, I consider the matter has not been clearly placed before the men ; therefore I will ask this House not to condemn the association, but, if condemnation is necessary, to put it on the shoulders of those who deserve it, the leaders and officers settled down here in Fremantle. We want to look at this matter not only in the interests of the electorate, not only in the interests of the State, but we must look at it from the best interests of the employees ; and I have no hesitation in saying that the men coming out on strike are not only working against the interests of the State, but against their own interests. As one who has taken an active part and one who has studied the subject, I am perfectly satisfied on the question. We must remember that this strike will not only affect the railway employees—and they in comparison to the whole of those whom it will affect are a very small number—but if the strike goes on and lasts for a very short time, thousands of men will be thrown out of employment in the electorate which I have the honour to represent. Therefore I say that we as members, whether we be labour members or not, should look at the question in its broad sense and see that injustice is not done to the innocent. I do not think it necessary for me to say any more on the subject, but I just wish before closing to mention to the House that they must not think the labour men are always going to take up their present stand on this question. We, at the present time would use arbitration in its best form, and if the House will suggest that there shall be arbitration, we shall be with them ; but on the other hand, if grievances come up and you do not grant the men what is

considered just, you will have the labour members equally against you. You must not run away with the idea that because we are supporting the Commissioner of Railways on this particular occasion you are always going to have the labour members with you, and we do not wish it to go forward to the people of this State that the labour members are against the workers. We are not against them. We say that in the stand we are taking up at the present time, we are acting in the best interests of the men affected by the proposed strike. On this ground we take our stand, whilst on the other hand we maintain that these men have grievances and these grievances must be overcome. The Commissioner of Railways must reorganise and reconstruct the wages and conditions of employees on the railways. Right through the railway department reforms are necessary, and the Minister should be given time and opportunity to bring about those reforms. I have full confidence that he will do so, and I repeat that time should be allowed him to do it, therefore I have no hesitation in saying the men are ill advised in this matter, and that they do not understand the full facts of the case. A large majority of the members of the Railway Association believe in and are prepared to abide by arbitration; therefore I say in this particular case they do not understand that arbitration has been suggested, and I maintain that if it is put forward that arbitration has been suggested and that the Commissioner of Railways is prepared to abide by it, these men will not come out on strike.

MR. H. TEESDALE SMITH (Wellington): As the representative of one of the largest industries employing labour, I consider the action of the Commissioner of Railways is such that he cannot be reproached for it at all. In my opinion he has acted most fairly and in a way which is greatly to his credit. I have it on the authority of the secretary of the Trades and Labour Council that he considers the offer of the member for East Frenantle (the Commissioner of Railways) absolutely fair, and I regard Mr. Croft as one who is well able to judge of this matter. I think also the Commissioner of Railways will have the support of every right-thinking man in this State in the action he has taken, and I shall have

much pleasure in giving him all the support I can.

MR. J. RESIDE (Hannans): It is to be regretted that this important question has come so early in the career of the new Administration; and I think the railway men concerned have not given to the new Minister fair-play in this matter. There is no doubt the railway workers in the past have suffered many grievances, and I consider the present difficulty is only the outcome of bad administration in the past. In the Eastern States they have a proper classification on the railways, so that the men know what wages they will get, and how long they will have to remain in the particular class at that wage. I think the time has arrived when we should adopt similar measures in this State, and the new Commissioner of Railways directed attention to this point at the beginning of his work. As far as the attitude of the Labour party is concerned, I think it is consistent; and as one who has been connected with labour organisations for many years, and has taken a direct interest in the railway organisations, I know what it is for the country to be placed in a difficulty like this. I took some interest in the locomotive engine-drivers' strike, and know there is no possibility of stopping the railway system for even one week, because the people on the goldfields would be reduced to absolute starvation, and serious difficulties would be created in other parts of the country. The railway workers are complaining that, on account of the composition of their society, and also on account of the manner in which the Conciliation and Arbitration Act was framed, there is one provision in it which exempts clerks from coming under the operation of that Act; and as the railway workers associations include railway clerks among their members, consequently as the clerks are not able to take advantage of the Act, the society of which they are members cannot register under it. I think the Commissioner of Railways has made a fair proposition in providing a special board of arbitration for dealing with this question; and we who have been advocating the advantages of arbitration would be wrong if we did not support the Minister at the present time. In making the offer which the Minister placed before

the men, I think it is a good one; and I do not see why the men should not accept it. I am surprised that those men who have complained of having been left out of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and are now offered an opportunity for a board of arbitration, do not take the chance of getting arbitration on this question. In regard to my action, I may say I am taking up this attitude in a fair and impartial manner; and as to the innuendos passed by some of the officers of the railway associations, I throw them back in their teeth, because I have taken up this attitude in a fair and impartial manner. I say there is every probability that this board which the Minister has proposed will give what the men want; and considering that the recommendations of the board when made are to be retrospective in effect, I think the men should accept the offer. I hope this railway trouble will have the effect of causing this House to pass a good Arbitration and Conciliation Act.

MR. G. THROSSELL (Northam) : Without knowing all that has gone before, I understand that reference has been made to my action as head of the late Government in dealing with railway men on the question of wages. I can only say that all I have said and done in connection with this matter is open, and nothing has been concealed. The matter came before me in the beginning of May, and I then informed the men who appealed to me that I considered the time of a political crisis was not a suitable time to consider the question of increasing wages, and I refused then to entertain it. Again they approached me; and I may tell this House, as I told others at that time, that it required no consideration from a practical man to see that the claims of those men for an increase of wages, if just, was at that time inopportune. When we find that agricultural wages have advanced 40 or 50 per cent. during recent years, it did not require much consideration in regard to men in the railway service who had been kept at 7s. a day during a long period in which wages in other employments have increased, to show that those men were entitled, after full investigation, to a fair advance in wages. Having said that much, I can only add that I deplore the present strike; but as to the claims of

the men not having been considered at an earlier date, I say the time was inopportune for me or any Minister to consider their claim, and it was properly refused at that time. Had I for a moment entertained the appeal then, there would have been thrown in my face the charge that it was a political sop on my part to grant an increase of wages to railway men for the purpose of gaining political power during a crisis. If the Labour leaders were here, they would bear me out in saying that I utterly refused to entertain the claim at that time, for the reason I have stated; and in doing so it must be evident that I utterly defied the Labour leaders or anyone else to say I was willing to entertain an appeal for increase of wages in a political crisis. I think now, as I have said before, that men who have been kept for a long time on a stationary wage of 7s. a day, and are still kept at that wage in a period when we know that the high cost of living is keeping population from us, and having pointed out that men at 7s. a day are bound to starve under such conditions, is not that proof that I did not attempt to gain political power by entertaining a demand for increase of wages in a political crisis? I do say now that these men are wrongly advised, and have taken a wrong course; and I am in accord with the Commissioner of Railways when he says he is willing to appoint a board to inquire into the whole question, and that the claims of the men shall have fair consideration. But I think also he should have given the men a definite date on which the whole question should be put before him; and if the Ministry is not prepared to deal with them then, the men will have the same remedy before them in a month's time as they have now. The men have been badly advised; and while I have no doubt this House will heartily support a fair increase of wages all round when the question properly comes before us, yet it is a big question, and the Commissioner of Railways is right in saying the whole matter is worthy of consideration. I think it will require greater consideration than he has yet given it, for it involves the greater question whether the railways of this State shall be run on commercial principles, or shall be run by the Government inde-

pendently of the question whether the railways pay or not. I repeat that had this matter to be dealt with by me over again, I should act in a similar way to what I have done. If the newspapers say this question of increasing the wages of railway men has been before the country for six or eight months, I say the first time I knew anything of the question was in May last, and that was not the time for me to be dealing with such a question as an increase of wages. The whole matter required consideration. In conclusion, I can only say that the action of the Commissioner of Railways, so far as I can judge from his political utterances, shall have my support; but a definite day should be named for the consideration of the whole question, and then if the men have not got a fair advance when that date arrives, they will have the same remedy open to them that they have now. When farmers and landowners are eagerly competing for agricultural labour at 7s. and 8s. a day, which labour was formerly obtainable for 5s. or 6s. a day, I say the wages of railway men should not be kept stationary. Having stated the action I took as a Minister, and my reason for taking it, I say again that I am in accord with other members in resisting this stand-and-deliver policy, and the Minister shall have my support, as I am sure he will have the support of every member in this House.

MR. R. SPEIGHT (North Perth): I have already expressed my views on the conduct of the men engaged in this strike that may possibly arise to-night. I have every sympathy with the Commissioner of Railways. He was approached when he entered office and a pistol put at his head by men who said, "Give us what we want, or we will do something." The Minister's reply was: "Allow me reasonable time to consider the proposal you make. I have not been in office sufficiently long enough to investigate; but I will undertake to tell you in a month whether you are entitled to an increase or not, and if you are not satisfied with that decision, you can then take what course you like." I think the employees should have rendered the Minister every assistance in his evident sympathy with them, in investigating the conditions of their demand. I do not go into the

question of the rights or wrongs of the case, because I am not conversant with them; but it was a reasonable request on the Minister's part to be allowed time, and it ought to have been conceded by the men. In regard to the employees, I may say that if these intimidating strikes are to be enforced without opportunity being given to fairly consider the question *pro* and *con.*, we shall have to farther legislate in such a way as will prevent the possibility of a body of men who have undertaken to carry on the public business of the country placing all the rest of the population at their mercy. We cannot sit down because we have not got the sources of supply and demand to replace all these men who, under the advice they are acting on, I do not say rightly or wrongly, choose to go out on strike; but I say distinctly they are wrong as regards their conduct in depriving the large community of the ordinary means of obtaining supplies and carrying on their business. Therefore I say they are wrong in taking this course, that they ought to have given to the Minister the opportunity of investigating the question; and if we are to be subject to these intimidations, we shall have to legislate in such a way that men who are engaged in carrying on the public services of the country cannot give us 24 hours' notice that they are going out of work. I am entirely in sympathy with the Commissioner of Railways, and I hope he will continue firm in the attitude he has taken.

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison): In speaking on this serious question, it will be easier to say too much than too little. An ill-advised word may acerbate feeling when our endeavour should be to remove irritation; and it is a matter for congratulation that in the speeches so far delivered here this afternoon, nothing has been said to which exception can be taken either by one side or the other, as having any tendency to increase instead of diminishing bitterness. I take it that on both sides of the House there is only one feeling, that the principle of arbitration and conciliation must be adhered to. But on the other hand we cannot forget that the men who threaten to take this serious step of going out on strike have a very serious grievance, and that the working man cannot always understand why it is that

when a request is made to a Government department, such an unconscionably long time should be taken in giving an answer to that request. I do not desire to say anything that will seem to throw a reflection on the present occupants of the Treasury benches, because in this matter I consider they have acted in a fair and conciliatory manner; but there cannot be a doubt that by the previous Administration the men were humbugged in a manner for which there is no excuse. I venture to think that when we are considering the question, we should take into consideration the fact that we are dealing with men who have an undoubted grievance, men who are suffering under a sense of wrong, and who are, therefore, more difficult to deal with. They cannot look at the matter in the calm and reasonable light in which it is so easy for members of this House to look at it, since our own interests are not concerned to an equal degree with those of the men. I will put it as a suggestion to the Government,—although I recognise that in anything I say I may be taking a wrong view of the matter—I will put it to the Government as a suggestion to consider whether every resource of conciliation has yet been exhausted. I have noticed in the newspapers that a certain amount of dissatisfaction has been expressed with the constitution of the proposed board. I put it forward merely as a suggestion: Is it too late even now to attempt some overtures to ascertain whether the representatives of the railway men have any proposal to make, by the adoption of which the suggested board can be made more agreeable to them without the Government sacrificing any principle that should not be sacrificed? It is, of course, possible that any overture of that kind, if made, may be replied to in such a way as to render it impossible for the Government to accede to the nominations which may be made by the railway men. If there is the slightest possibility—merely a hair's-breadth possibility—that by altering to some extent the constitution of this board the difficulty may be settled without a strike, then I say the Government are justified in holding out the olive branch to the very last possible moment. Another point was mentioned by the member for Northam (Mr. Throssell),

and the suggestion he made seemed to me to contain in it very much of value—as to whether it would not be possible for the Government to give some sort of an idea of when, in the event of the matter being referred to a board, that board would give its decision. Let us endeavour to look at the case for a moment as the men who are aggrieved look at it. They recognise that this matter has been pending for months, and they ask themselves, “If we agree to the board now, how do we know that we may not be kept on waiting for quite as long a time as we have been kept waiting in the past?”

A MEMBER: The decision of the board is retrospective.

MR. NANSON: I know the decision is retrospective; but these men, as I suppose the hon. members of the Labour party can certify, are not in the habit of keeping banking accounts of their own. If it is a matter of waiting several months before they get this increase of pay, or even if it is only a matter of one month, could not the Government give them some sort of an assurance that the decision would be arrived at in a reasonable time?

A MEMBER: The decision will be given at once.

MR. NANSON: At once? It is an unfortunate circumstance, perhaps, that the men have in the House no thorough champion, who can explain exactly how they look at the matter. If they look at it from the aspect that they might be kept waiting for a long time, and if the Government are in a position to assure them that the whole thing can be settled in a month or six weeks, surely it is better for that assurance to be given now rather than to give it at a later stage when, perhaps, the country has been put to all the loss and suffering a strike would involve.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Kingsmill): I heard with some interest the remarks of the hon. member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) regarding the board proposed to be appointed by the Government. While not wishing for a moment to cut away the ground which may still exist for hoping that this strike difficulty may be speedily rectified, yet I would point out to the hon. member, and to the House, that the steps he is advocating have already practically been

taken. The Commissioner of Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes) did me the honour, when considering this subject, to consult me in regard to the formation of the board. I think, in common with some of the Labour members who have already expressed an opinion on the subject, that the board could not possibly be fairer. It was to consist of one officer of the Railway Department, one officer of the Public Works Department, one employee of the Railway Department, and one employee of the Public Works Department, with a chairman to be approved by those four members. What fairer proposal could possibly have been made I do not know. As for the urgency of the matter, that, too, was fully recognised. It was proposed that if the representatives of the employees were ready, the representatives of the departments involved should be appointed on the afternoon of the day on which this discussion was held. It was not a matter of days; it was simply a matter of hours. The board could have proceeded to sit the next day, and could have taken the case into consideration straight away. If the difficulty was to be settled, it could be settled practically in a few moments. What occurs to me is that this is not a strike of a large body of men—it is the strike of one man. It is the strike of the leader of that body of men; and I would counsel them, if my words could reach them, to beware of that leader, because they are being led into wrong paths; they are being led into misery and perhaps into disaster. I would counsel those men, if my words could reach them, to beware of the wolves in sheep's clothing who are urging them in the direction which they now seem inclined to take. I would like to congratulate most heartily the members of the Labour party on the dignified and reasonable attitude which they have taken up on this subject. The warning which the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Johnson) held out that the Minister of Railways, or indeed the Government, need not expect the Labour members to act as they are acting now in support of the Government on all occasions, was not needed; because, for my part, I recognise that a body of men who have taken up such a reasonable and sensible attitude as this must, if our case were bad, take up as firm and determined an

attitude on the other side. I think, as a matter of fact that the only typical Labour member—and when I say “typical” labour member I mean only a labour member of the conventional type—that we have in the House seems to me to be the member for Northam (Mr. Throssell). That hon. gentleman has explained that it was no part of his province to deal with the matter, as he was on the verge of leaving office. That, I recognise, is quite correct. But if the hon. gentleman was not prepared to deal with the matter, why did he think that it fell within his province to express so extremely decided an opinion on the merits of the case? That is what I cannot understand. His not dealing with it is perfectly right; but that expression of opinion was, to my mind, absolutely injudicious from the point of view of the country, however judicious it might have been from the hon. gentleman's own point of view. Not only that, but it was absolutely unnecessary.

A MEMBER: Was it not confidential?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was published in the Press.

MR. W. B. GORDON (South Perth): It is not my intention either to praise the Government in power or to run them down. Farther, it is not my intention either to blame in any way the past Administration, or on the other hand to praise them. Neither is it my intention to use any ill-advised words, or to fill *Hansard*. But I do think that the expressions that have fallen from the member for Northam with regard to his action when he was approached by the Labour party were just as dignified and fair as the attitude of the present Minister for Railways. The member for Northam probably had in his mind that he was going out of power, and that in the position he held he was justified in saying his honest opinion was that the men were right. I believe most members of this House to-day think the men are right; but members are against the action which the men are taking. Therefore I would like, apart from any other remarks I may make, to compliment the Minister for Railways on the stand he has taken in this matter. I go farther, and I maintain that if other Ministers in the future take the same stand which he has taken and do it so nicely, their life will be a

very long one. For my part I give Ministers my full support in the very critical time we are probably about to face.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) : It was not my intention to enter on this debate, but I feel that it is absolutely necessary that someone who knows the exact position should make it clear to the House. I have listened to the speakers on both sides of the House, and they have failed to convey to me the exact position. I know it, and their conveyance of the position does not tally with my ideas. This House must remember that there was a strike of "farm" labourers at Fremantle some time ago, and that the men called on the Labour party to assist them to get their wrongs adjusted. The Labour party, along with the Fremantle members, interviewed the Minister for Railways; and I may state here that the interview availed nothing. I wish to say that I did not hold with the attitude taken up by the Minister for Railways up till last Sunday, or I may say until last Tuesday at twelve o'clock. I was against the high-handed attitude which the Minister assumed. He did not show any signs that he possessed a knowledge of trades union methods, or of the method of settling trade disputes; nor did he show any disposition of meeting the men at all. He took up a certain stand, and that stand he maintained; and I say it was the stand he took that incensed the men. A meeting of those men was held last Sunday evening. At that meeting I was appointed a member of a deputation to wait on the Minister for Railways. He received the deputation at 3 o'clock on Monday afternoon, and it was only at that interview I learned that 600 fettlers had sent in an ultimatum setting forth that unless their wages were raised from 7s. to 8s. a day—I think it was—they would go out at 10 o'clock on Wednesday. If I am not right, the Minister can correct me. When the arguments of the deputation were used to settle the "farm" labourers' strike, the Minister pointed out that if he conceded the 1s. 3d. per day to those men on the farm and 2s. overtime, he would have every section in the department down on him for a rise, and he held up the ultimatum and said, "I wish to settle this dispute by the readjustment of the

Railway Department." At that time no person knew the way in which this readjustment was to take place, and it was generally thought the readjustment would be by the Railway Department, and that the men would have no voice in that readjustment. During the interview, which lasted from 3 o'clock on Monday afternoon until 7 that evening, the present board of conciliation was advanced, and was accepted by the Minister after a long debate, and we, as the Labour men, thought it was fair and just. The board is constituted not exactly as the Minister for Works put it. He erred with reference to the appointment of the chairman, and I hope members will follow me, as I was one of the parties who suggested the exact form the board should take. The Commissioner of Railways was to appoint one man, the Minister for Works one, the members of the Railway Association one, and the employees of the Works Department one, whilst the chairman was to be mutually agreed upon by the two hon. gentlemen, myself, and Mr. Croft the secretary of the Trades and Labour Council of Perth. If I am wrong, I stand corrected.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : Quite right.

MR. TAYLOR : I hold that the board being constituted in that way, it is really in about the most liberal and democratic form that any board could take to settle a strike at a similar crisis. So far as the "farm" labourers were concerned, I was representing them at that deputation, and my duty then ceased. I had no jurisdiction with the fettlers, but the secretary of the Employees' Association, Mr. Guilfoyle, was at the deputation, and I state here, as I stated at the meeting, that Mr. Guilfoyle at that deputation did not appear to me to be trying to advocate the cause of the farm labourers, which he was appointed to do, but to be advocating the cause of these fettlers, some six hundred, the whole time. I think the Minister and other members of the deputation will bear me out, and I feel sure that by his conduct Mr. Guilfoyle prevented a probable settlement of the farm labourers' disturbance. After this board was decided upon, one went to Fremantle and asked Mr. Guilfoyle if the railway employees would appoint their man. I wish to tell

the House, in answer to the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), that this board was to be appointed on Tuesday evening. The Ministry decided they would appoint their man on Tuesday evening, if we or the employees were prepared to appoint ours. We said we would appoint ours. The chairman was to be mutually decided upon, and myself and Mr. Croft suggested two men to the Ministers. The reply was, "Either of these will do us." So we practically appointed the chairman, and in the face of that I say the board was a very fairly constituted one, and no body of working men could get a fairer board to adjust their wrongs. Then the understanding was that the board was to sit on Wednesday, see the farm labourers at work and decide the farm labourers' rate of wages, and then deal immediately with the fettlers on strike, and if they did not cover the whole of the fettlers from one end of the line to the other on that day, whenever they did their decision should be retrospective, and the rate of pay would go on from the day the board was formed, or the day the men resumed work. I think I have made clear the way in which that board was formed, and I may take a great deal of credit to myself for that board having been formed in the manner it was. I told those strikers that while their cause was just I would fight with them, and do my level best outside Parliament and inside Parliament to see they got a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. According to the report in the paper this morning it has been said by Mr. Guilfoyle that the Commissioner of Railways was "pulling my leg"—I have not felt him yet—and that I had abandoned the men on strike. It is not so. I told the men that if the railway employees did not accept that board, I did not know as a trades unionist why they could not accept it, as I looked upon it as a fairly constituted board; but there might be some underlying principle in the Railway Department which I knew nothing of that prevented that board from being fair from the railway employees' point of view. Not being a railway employee, but having been a working man all my life, and having been engaged in every branch of labour, I hold that this board was a good and proper one to decide the case. As I said before,

I do not mean to say the railway employees are altogether wrong in not accepting that board, because there might be some underlying principle which I do not know that might prevent the employees from getting their just rights according to what they think proper; but I cannot see it. I am certainly of opinion that whoever is guiding them in this matter is wrong, and my argument in support of that contention is this. The railway employees are an organised body of workers, and the men in the Works Department are unorganised. There are some few, I think, protected by trades unions, but they are scattered, and I do not know where they are. The workers of that department would have a right to adjust their wrongs, and I assert that if the railway employees as a body of unionists had any particle of unionism in them, and the welfare of trades unionism at heart, they would sink their differences in the interests of the unorganised crowd that are working. As a trades unionist or member of Parliament I can defend my attitude from a labour point of view, and I certainly say these men are wrong if they go out on strike to-night in the face of this board being offered to them, and I hope the Minister will keep this board open to these men for some time. I feel sure the men will see the necessity of availing themselves of that way of adjusting their wrong. I would also point out that the member for Northam (Mr. Throssell) said he thoroughly agreed with the men that they were underpaid. If it took that hon. gentleman eight or ten years to find that out, I do not wonder the Commissioner of Railways could not find it out in three or four weeks. It was bad taste for an out-going Minister to saddle an in-coming Minister with a recommendation to raise people's wages. If the Premier thought these men deserved a rise of wages, it was more his duty on going out of office to raise their wages than to saddle the in-coming Ministry with recommendations for an increase. The only argument these men have used to me was, "We have proved our case up to the hilt. The hon. member for Northam said so when he was going out of power, and, if he had remained in, he would have given us the increase. In the face of that the Commissioner of Railways cannot refuse, and this Government cannot refuse."

That is the only argument Mr. Guilfoyle advanced as secretary of the association in favour of not accepting that board. If it took them twelve months or two or three years to find out they were so badly treated, they ought to be able to wait for two days, as their grievances could be adjusted by this board within 48 hours.

A MEMBER: And made retrospective.

MR. TAYLOR: And made retrospective. The member for the Murchison pointed out that the men might starve while waiting. I am pleased to think that hon. member takes such a keen interest in the workers, and that is one of the reasons why I rose to make clear to the House that there was no possible chance of the men suffering any inconvenience by going to this board. The inconvenience will be when they come out at 12 o'clock to-night. I am certainly in favour of the Government holding out this board to these men to settle upon their rise of wages. I thank members for the attention with which they have listened to me.

MR. F. W. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): Whatever doubts I may have had up to this evening on the merits of this strike or intended strike, they certainly have been removed by the speeches I have just listened to, especially from labour gentlemen. I may say my sympathies are with the employees, and I waited to hear those gentlemen speak as men who are intimately acquainted with the ins and outs of the question, and who participated to a certain extent in the struggle. Having heard what they had to say, I assert that I never listened to more overwhelming testimony of the unreasonableness of the action of any association than I have heard this evening. I am satisfied all that could be consistently done with the dignity appertaining to the Commissioner of Railways has been done by the hon. gentleman who holds that position, and I think it would be unworthy of this House if we advanced any other proposition this evening for the solution of the difficulty. As far as I understand the motion for the adjournment, it was made with the object of eliciting from this House some suggestion for a solution of the difficulty; but from the testimony I have heard to-day from the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie), the member for Mount

Margaret (Mr. Taylor), and those other gentlemen who have spoken, I say the proposition made on the part of the Commissioner of Railways was a reasonable proposition. It was one which commended itself to those gentlemen who directly represent labour, and one which must commend itself to every reasonable man in this House. Therefore how can we, consistently with the dignity which we owe to this House, retreat from that proposition and suggest any other solution of the difficulty? On all sides it is admitted that the board which was suggested was an impartial board, and one which would arrive at a satisfactory conclusion; at least satisfactory to these gentlemen who, I have said, directly represent labour. The only note of dissent, so far as we have heard, is from the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), and I have failed to see that the solution he offers is consonant with the dignity of this House, or more likely to lead to a solution of the difficulty which undoubtedly stares us in the face. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that we are at present in a position of an alarming nature. We are face to face with a strike which may for a time cause great privations on the goldfields. As we have been told by one hon. member, this is a country of distances. For instance, the constituency I have the honour to represent is no less than 600 or 800 miles from the centre in Perth, and if all the railway men come out, privations of a serious character will ensue to many persons in the more distant parts of the country. I am satisfied to-night from the overflowing evidence we have of the unreasonable attitude of the men, that the country will not be with the strikers, and the strike must fail from its internal weakness. Therefore I think the strike will last only a couple of days, and if we have the support of the community with us in supporting the Commissioner of Railways on this question, the strike will terminate at a much earlier date. As one who has supported trade organisations and has recognised that the amelioration of the condition of workers all the world over is due to trade organisations, I apprehend that a serious blow will be dealt to such organisations if this inexcusable strike be carried out. It must necessarily be so, because every

organisation that is on strike cannot depend on its own means, but must depend on the support and sympathy of the community at large. In these circumstances I think there is danger of a great deal of harm being done to the people at large and to the State; but I also apprehend considerable damage will be done to an association which was undoubtedly formed for the benefit of the workers, and which would otherwise be likely to bring great improvement in their condition. It is admitted on all hands that the railway employees have grievances; but I distinctly state that, having listened to the speeches to-night, I regard this difficulty as really an inheritance handed down to the present Ministry. The grievances of the railway men were not for the first time brought under the attention of the gentleman who now holds the position of Commissioner of Railways. So far from that being so, the evidence discloses that for seven long months, recognised and admitted grievances were before the Cabinet to which the member for Northam (Mr. G. Throssell) belonged.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: They were not before the Cabinet.

MR. MOORHEAD: Then, worse still: they ought to have been brought before the Cabinet. Still, perhaps that is one of the little matters of which the late Premier complained in that famous speech in which he told us that underestimates were brought before the House against his opinion. If members of the Cabinet were so blind as not to stand up and defend their position, as responsible for their several departments, how can hon. members say that this matter ought not to have been brought before the Cabinet when it was Cabinet business? At any rate, for seven months it was before a responsible Minister of the Crown; and how to divide the responsibility and thrust it on an individual member of that Cabinet, I fail to see as a constitutional student. I say it is not only an inheritance from the late Government, but a result of the direct personal interference of the member for Northam with various departments when he was Premier; an interference which we trace in departments other than his own. How can he defend himself when writing to the secretary of the Railway Association,

as a Minister who had retired from the position, and saying: "I consider your case proved up to the hilt, and I have left it on record." These words were written three days after the hon. member resigned his portfolio. What do they mean? They mean this. My friends opposite are coming into office: let us throw down the apple of discord at once. The testimony we had to-night of the unreasonableness of reasonable men goes to prove that this movement is nothing more, in my opinion, than a political dodge. The member for Northam told these men three days after he had resigned office, namely on the 17th May: "I have left it on record that you have proved your case up to the hilt." I challenge the hon. member to put his finger on a single official document in which he left that on record. So far from that being so, the only scintilla of such a proposition, that he approved of their demand and left it on record, was that he wrote to the Under-Secretary in these terms:—"I consider the men have made out a case. What will it cost? What will it entail on the Department for an increase of wages?" That is the only shadow of evidence of his statement that he left it on record. I say the present difficulties have been brought about mainly through the personal interference on the part of the hon. member for Northam. It might have been that light-hearted or airy and indefinite way in which he dealt with public affairs when he was touring about the country making promises here and there to constituencies, land grants in Kalgoorlie and promises of money in various other places. I attribute the present labour trouble to what the Minister for Public Works indicated, when he said the leaders were nothing else than wolves in sheep's clothing. I prefer to think those men have a grievance, but are directly misled, and are being made catspaws of for a political object. I sympathise heartily with those men. We have it to-night from those intimately connected with them that the offer of the Commissioner of Railways may not have been thoroughly explained to the men concerned. I have always found working men reasonable when you could approach them. If so, it lies directly on the shoulders of the member for Northam, and perhaps indirectly on the

leaders whom he may have misled, that this trouble has come on us.

MR. FRANK WILSON (Perth): All members agree that nothing could be more disastrous than a strike such as we are threatened with this evening; and although I agree to a certain extent with the remarks of the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), that it is sometimes dangerous to say too much in connection with these matters, yet at the present time when we find a dispute of this magnitude existing between the Government and the largest section of their workers, namely those employed in the Railway Department, it is certainly due that the members of this House should express their opinion in no uncertain voice. It is with that idea I have risen to add a few remarks, as one who has long been an employer of labour, in regard to this unfortunate difficulty. I want to express my gratification at the action of the members who sit behind me—those members who directly represent Labour in this Chamber—in fearlessly standing up and stating that they consider the offer made by the Commissioner of Railways is one which the employees should accept. They have not only stated that opinion in this House, but I see by the newspapers they have already advised the different sections of the union affected that the offer is one which should be accepted by them. When we find members who are directly representing those men are taking this stand and explaining this decision so clearly as they have explained it to-night, it is due to us to pronounce our determination as a Parliament to support the Commissioner and the Government in this terrible dispute with which we are threatened. There is one matter I take exception to in the remarks made by the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) with regard to the composition of the proposed arbitration board. He says it has been contended in the Press that the men are not satisfied with the composition of the proposed board. When we consider, from the explanation made by one of the Labour members, that the board is to be composed of two members representing the labour element and two representing the departments, surely the representatives of the men should see that they get to work early, and should see that they have the

power in their hands to thoroughly investigate this question and make a report.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The men will not nominate their representatives.

MR. WILSON: Exactly; my argument is that the men are to be fully and equally represented on this conciliation board, and there should be no delay if the representatives do their duty. There is another point, and that is that an agreement exists between the employees and the Government as to the terms of their employment. I believe, as an employer, they are subject to 14 days' notice. Then how is it that those men are leaving their employment after 48 hours' notice? Surely there is a breach of agreement there, and surely that is something we should resist. If they wish to leave their employment they should, according to their agreement, give the 14 days' notice; and if they had taken that legal course, I think wiser counsels would have prevailed, and then probably the terms offered by the Commissioner of Railways would have been accepted by the men. I hope it is not too late even now, seeing that the whole railway system of the country will be paralysed by the action of the men this evening, and that in a very short time thousands of workmen will have to cease their employment, because it will not take long before all the industries in the State are affected. You will have the timber industry, the coal industry, and the mining industry stopped very shortly; and what is going to be the result? It cannot go on. It means that the virulence of the disease is bound to be its remedy. This state of affairs cannot be put up with; it must be brought to an end, and that very rapidly. I cannot conceive for one moment that the Government of this State will be allowed by this House to be practically bullied into deciding to grant a demand, no matter how fair that demand may be, without the proper constitutional course being taken by the men who are making it. They will have to give due notice, and to act up to what they have contended for times out of number—that is, arbitration and conciliation, the acceptance of which will practically put them on the same terms as the Act which we passed last session.

A MEMBER: Better terms.

MR. WILSON : Better terms, an hon. member reminds me. If the men will act up to the principle they have advocated, and say "We have a just claim and intend to stand behind that claim with the whole force of our union and all our power, but yet we will submit it to the tribunal you suggest," then they will have the sympathy and support of this House and of the people of this State. But I think the hands of the Commissioner of Railways should be strengthened to-night. We have heard from the representatives of Labour in this House that the offer of the Government is fair and reasonable, and all that can possibly be asked by the men. We have it from those gentlemen that the composition of the board is such as meets with their approval. What more can the men ask for? I think nothing; and I think that the members of this House should from their places let the country know, and the Ministry know, that they intend to stand by and support the Commissioner of Railways in his attitude, and that they will allow no unfair advantage to be taken by any section of the community.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Williams) : The appearance of the debate suggests that it is likely to be prolonged until after dinner. I shall not have the opportunity of being here this evening, but I would not like the discussion to close without a few remarks from me. I may say that at first it was not my intention to address myself to the subject at all, or to deal with it in any way, for the reason that, as hon. members know, it is a matter which has caused me personally considerable anxiety in the past; and I thought it was not perhaps prudent of me to say anything at this stage. But as a statement has been made by the member for North Murchison (Mr. F. W. Moorhead), that the strike is the result of a political move on the part of this side of the House, I think it is certainly necessary that I should just ask the hon. member what he means by a political move. His allusion referred to the action which the member for Northam took in this matter. Perhaps there may be some exception taken to the course adopted by that hon. member in connection with this minute; but as to charging the whole of this side of the House with bringing about the disturbance as a

political move, I think that charge is uncalled-for and should not have been made. I can assure the House that it is farthest from my thoughts to do anything which may have a tendency to stir up strife, and that there is no one sympathises more than I do with the Government in the difficulty in which they find themselves. Assuredly if I could by any means in my power bring about a settlement of this difficulty and so restore to the country a peaceful condition in regard to the working of the railways, I would do my utmost to help the Government in every respect. I feel that in this instance there can be no party division, the matter being of the greatest moment to the country. I deeply regret that any allusion of the kind referred to should have been made, and that is why I object to the remark of the member for North Murchison. Now the member for Kanowna (Mr. R. Hastie), in moving the adjournment of the House, asked that suggestions should be made as to how hon. members can assist in a settlement of the difficulty; and it appears to me that so far no such suggestions have been made. No doubt the member for North Murchison (Mr. F. W. Moorhead) took a very proper stand in expressing the opinion that it would be undignified on the part of the House at this stage to make any suggestion other than that already made, namely to support the Commissioner of Railways in the course he has taken. It seems to me that the Commissioner's attitude is one which must commend itself to the country; and, therefore, it having been once determined that the course which he has set before the men is the right one, I consider that no farther suggestion should be made by the House at this stage, beyond indorsing the action of the Commissioner. I am glad to note that allusion has been made by the hon. members who represent labour, to the beneficial influence of those who at times control such organisations as this. I agree with those members that is so in many instances, but perhaps occasionally those who control the affairs of labour organisations are imbued with the idea of bringing about a disturbance of this kind for their own ends, with a desire to make themselves popular. Now, although it has often been stated that I am opposed to labour, as my past actions have often

been against labour, I would say to-day that there is no one more desirous than myself of working amicably with labour. I always tried to do my best for labour; I have tried to deal fairly and justly with labour; and, except in the instance of the unfortunate disagreement which I had with the association, I may say that throughout the whole of my administration I in all matters worked on the most amicable terms with the large body of railway servants. It was only when they asked for the recognition of the Railway Association that there arose a little difference between them and me. It was not because I did not wish to see the formation of an association that I refused it official recognition: my objection was to one or two things which they had embodied in their request, or I may say their demand, which has now been similarly made in this instance. Those matters that I have mentioned I could not agree to. If we could have overcome those points, I am quite sure we would have been able to-day to point to a solution of the difficulty in the past and to say that we could by similar means prevent such occurrences as are now taking place. I think, too, that amongst those men there are undoubtedly—and I have said this before—many whose opinions we would value, men of good common sense, men who no doubt to-day if they were given a free hand would do much to settle this difficulty. It is men of the other class, men who for their own aggrandisement and from a desire to push themselves ahead, that have done a great deal to bring about the present state of affairs. It is plain from the observations made by the leader of the Labour members, observations exhibiting such a degree of moderation and tolerance as I am sure is most creditable, that those members have done everything that in my opinion can at the present time be expected of them, to arrive at a solution of the difficulty by getting the men to return to work. I say they have done their best, and I am sure they will continue to do their best. I hope that the discussion which has taken place in this House to-night will bear such fruit as will prevent the calling out of the men at midnight in accordance with the apparent intention of their leaders. Now there is one other observation I would like to make, and that is in regard

to a remark made by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. W. D. Johnson), who stated to-night that he considers the men do not fully understand the facts of the case. I think that in these days of rapid communication, when every information is given to the Press, such a statement as that can hardly be put forward. I do not wish to say that these men have not had anything withheld from them; but I say that through the medium of the Press, which passes all over the State daily, the men should have been in a position to judge of the condition of matters with regard to this difficulty. They have heard all that has been said, or they have read it if they have not heard it; and therefore they have had abundance of opportunity to judge of the justice of the offer which has been made by the Commissioner of Railways. I think there is no excuse for them in this respect, because they are kept well posted up.

A MEMBER: No.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes; they have every means of finding out all particulars in regard to the matter, and they should therefore make themselves thoroughly well aware of all the conditions before acting in the manner in which it appears they intend to act. Now, before I conclude I wish to say this also. Although the threat has been made, although it appears that the men can be called out by the executive of the union and put the country to all the expense and trouble involved in a strike, still I think that wiser counsels will prevail. From my knowledge of a great many of the men, and of the want of unanimity, in some respects, in regard to this matter, I am inclined to believe that at the stroke of 12 to-night, when it is now thought that the railways will be stopped, it will be found that a very large number of men will on this occasion disobey the orders of their unions and will not go out on strike. And I think they will be supported, and well supported, by this community. The men should think better of it, and I trust everyone will do his best with those in authority in the unions to induce them, for the time being at least, to abstain from the action which they propose to take. Perhaps the Government could in some way, without retiring from the position they have taken

up, adopt a course which would bring about a settlement of the difficulty. They have already promised that a board shall be appointed; they have stated that they hope the results of that board's deliberations will be placed before the country at an early date. In view of this I think that probably there might be a way of getting over the difficulty by giving the men some hope of an early settlement, even if it is two months ahead. For if the men only knew that they would have the matter settled at the end of two months, it would, I have little doubt, act as an inducement to them to accept the conditions offered. At the same time I do not suggest going any farther than this. I have not gone very thoroughly into the case; I have not watched it very closely; and I am not sure, therefore, whether even such a step as I propose could be taken without retiring in any way from the dignified position taken by the Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We told the delegates that it would be within the powers of the board to make a special case for the "farm" hands and the fettleers, and that the pay would be made retrospective.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I understood the Minister was unable to fix a definite date.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The date would be for the board to fix.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Then, I take it the Government have done everything they can, and it is not necessary to say anything more on the subject, on which I really did not desire to speak at all. I really rose only to refute the political allusion. I again say that it is my earnest desire to do all that may be in my power to help the Government; and I think there is that one desire on this side of the House as a whole—to do our very best to bring about a settlement of the difficulty.

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

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. C. H. RASON (Guildford): I cannot imagine anything more regrettable than that this debate, introduced in the most admirable manner by the leader of the Labour party (Mr. Hastie) and with

the most laudable intention, should in any way become tinged with the colour of party politics. To my mind, it is a question wholly removed from political party strife, wholly superior to the political reputation of any past or even present Minister. The question is one which affects the whole of the State. The member who introduced it did so with the honest desire of causing something to be done, if possible, to prevent the lamentable strike with which we are now threatened. Any member who expresses an opinion as to the merits of the claims of the men accepts a great responsibility, a responsibility which I am not prepared to accept at the present moment, not being wholly seized of the facts of the case. All I have to guide me is my knowledge or idea of what is right under the existing circumstances. A strike or lock-out is only justifiable when he who considers himself aggrieved has exhausted every other means at his disposal to obtain redress, and I can come to no other conclusion than that the railway servants have not adopted the means at their disposal to obtain redress; therefore they are not justified in inflicting upon this State the calamity of a railway strike. I am not able to offer suggestions to the Commissioner of Railways; in fact, I think it would be impertinent on my part to do so. He has done that which he considers the right thing under the circumstances, and I venture to say that in the opinion of this House he has done what any fair-minded man would have done under similar circumstances. I have always had the greatest sympathy, the greatest admiration, I may say, for the railway men in this State, and I trust and sincerely hope that they will do nothing at this juncture which will forfeit the respect and admiration I have ever hitherto had for them. If I had an opportunity of appealing to them, I should point out that although it is at all times somewhat hard for a man who has taken up a position to back down from it, yet if they back out—if I may use the term, which is not an equivalent to backing down—it would be in every way honourable to them. If they persist in striking, only one of two things can happen. Either the strike must last a very short time, when they will fail in obtaining what they desire, or else it will

last for such a long while and be of such a comprehensive nature that it will inflict misery, hardship, and perhaps permanent loss on their fellow-workers, who are entirely innocent of any cause of blame on their account, and who are, I believe, in the majority of cases entirely in sympathy with them. In the event of the employees adopting the course they threaten, they will alienate from themselves the support of all right-thinking people; and whatever the result of the strike may be, if they persist in it they will undoubtedly aim the most severe blow at trades unionism and trades organisations that has possibly ever been inflicted in this State. I would remind them also that whatever may be the result, there is only one inevitable consequence so far as their fellow workers in this State are concerned, namely that during the continuance of that strike, whether it be a long or a short one, the strikers must inflict upon their fellow workers a great amount of hardship and misery which they are not entitled to inflict upon them. Before concluding, I wish to say I congratulate the leader of the Labour party, and in fact I congratulate the whole of that party upon the admirable way in which they have treated this matter. If they bring to bear on all other subjects which come up for consideration in this House the same calm deliberation, the same sense of fair-play, as they have exhibited on this occasion, then this House will always have cause to welcome their advent to the Assembly. I say, without the slightest hesitation, that it is my duty to support the Commissioner of Railways in the attitude he has adopted, and this I shall do as long as the men on their side adopt the course, which I consider wholly unjustifiable, they have taken on this question.

MR. F. REID (Mount Burges) : I am the last member of the Labour party to speak on this subject, but I come forward as a unionist of 30 years' standing, during which time it has been my privilege, or my misfortune perhaps, to take part in many strikes. During the whole of that period it has been the ambition, the aspiration of the working classes in whichever country I have been that a Bill might be passed in the Parliament of the country which would compel

the various parties in a dispute to submit that dispute to arbitration; and I have always remarked during my career that there must be something very demoralising in the atmosphere of Parliament itself, because most of the Labour members sent to Parliament often forget their pledges—forget the people who sent them there, and turn round and support the Government of the day. I am sorry that the Labour party on this occasion have turned round so quickly with the Government; not sorry we are supporting the Government at the present time, but sorry that, being supporters of right and justice, the occasion has arisen which compels us to espouse the cause of the Government in this case. I certainly believe the workers on the railway and elsewhere are entitled to an advance in the rate of wages. In my opinion 7s. per day is altogether too little to allow a man to support a wife and family. Moreover, you must remember that many of these men are paying 10s. a week rent, which will leave them only the very insignificant sum of 32s. a week to support a wife and family. We certainly sympathise with them, and we believe in the justice of their cause, but at the same time we do not believe in the way in which they have brought forward this case at the present time. I certainly support the Commissioner of Railways in his action in offering the appointment of a board to settle the case between himself and the Government Railway Association, and I think it would have been much better and more diplomatic on the part of the workers if they had accepted the offer. At the same time, to-night an effort has been made to throw some discredit, some responsibility, on to the workers themselves. I know to a very large extent the workers are in favour of accepting the proposal put forward by the Commissioner of Railways; that is, to submit the whole question to arbitration. In my opinion it is not the workers who are responsible, but those men who are at the present time misleading them. I trust every member in the House will express an opinion to-night in favour of the proposal put forward by the Commissioner of Railways to settle this dispute. I am not sure that any more talking would do farther good, but I think if members on both the Opposition

and the Ministerial benches would rise and make their obeisance to signify that they agree with the proposition put forward by the Commissioner of Railways, it would have a very good effect.

A MEMBER: We are all in favour of it.

MR. REID: The member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), speaking to-night, said the facts had been properly placed before the workers. I am of opinion that a great number of those people are not cognisant of the facts of the case. Many of us in travelling between Perth and the goldfields often see a number of men by the wayside who will sing out for a paper, and we know very well that these men do not often see a paper more than once a week. As a matter of fact, to justify the statement I have made to-night that many of them are not cognisant of the facts of the case, I may say that several gentlemen who came down from Kalgoorlie on Mr. Johnson's behalf in a case which has been tried in the courts—I think there were seven of them—were entirely ignorant of the whole of the facts of the case until they arrived here, and I understand they have actually gone to the place where a meeting is being held at the present time, and intend to demand admission. These men, I repeat, were entirely ignorant of the facts of the case before they arrived here. In order to obviate trouble and distress in the future, and in order to get over this difficulty, I really hope wiser counsels will prevail amongst the workers; and I hope and trust that those men will endeavour as far as they possibly can to bring influence to bear on those who at present are urging them to accept the conditions which have been offered and ought to be accepted. I have learned in conversation with the executive committee that the representatives of one association were opposed to the proposition of the Commissioner of Railways, but after some discussion four of them were favourably disposed to the offer. Therefore, judging from those instances, I think that if the whole facts of the case were properly placed before the employees of the railways, the whole matter would be calmly brought to a conclusion. I sincerely hope that will be the case. I would not have risen to-night had it not been that I have taken a certain stand in this matter. I

have taken the liberty, along with one of my colleagues, to send telegrams to Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie, urging the men to accept the conditions and remain loyal to the Railway Department. I have, at the same time, taken the responsibility of supporting the offer made by the Commissioner of Railways, and I sincerely hope that in connection with this trouble wiser counsels will prevail, and that this strike which is imminent at the present time will not take place. I have here a wire, received this afternoon from Kalgoorlie, which says:—"After gauging public opinion, advise you see secretary, and counsel them accept arbitration." This is from a country district, and I venture to say the opinion expressed in this wire is the general opinion held by workers all over the districts affected at the present time.

THE PREMIER (Hon. G. Leake): Members of this House to-night have been struck by the ring of sincerity and sound reason in the honest, manly expression of opinion which has come from the members of the Labour party. It must be a source of extreme gratification on both sides of the House to realise that on an occasion like this, when they are eminently qualified to express their views, they rise to the higher level of statesmanship; and to their efforts will be due thanks in the event of this unfortunate strike being brought to a successful conclusion. It is a happy augury when we are permitted to listen to such a telegram as that which has just been read by the member for Mt. Burgess (Mr. F. Reid). It shows there have been influences used by the Labour members in the best manner possible, and that they are men of action and not men of mere words. Whilst I refer to the members of the Labour party, I wish to take this opportunity of congratulating the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Johnson) on the fact that the election petition which was presented against him in the Supreme Court has been dismissed. The motion before the House is one to adjourn, made by the member for Kanowna (Mr. R. Hastie) with the idea of airing this important question. So much has been said on the subject that I shall add but little to the debate, but to merely say that we can do no more than express our honest opinion on the situa-

tion. We cannot, by any substantial resolution or amendment, make any suggestion to deal with this matter in a manner different from that which has been adopted by the Commissioner of Railways. The Commissioner has expressed the opinion of myself and of this Government; and the attitude he has taken and in which he is supported is one I hope of firmness and of fairness. I will ask hon. members to bear in mind this, that the Government have not placed obstacles in the way of men accepting the terms which have been proposed. Although these terms have been rejected, they are, so far as we are concerned, still open for acceptance: we withdraw nothing. We are still prepared to refer the matter to the board which has been suggested by the Commissioner of Railways, and we are prepared to make the determination of that board retrospective. Beyond that, I do not think the House will expect us to go. That is a position which seems to meet with the approval of hon. members, and I venture to think of the public. I do regret extremely to think that men honest in their intention and loyal in their service, should be misled by men who may possibly be actuated by ulterior motives. I sympathise entirely with the men, and I deprecate the action of those who would mislead them. I wish no more than this, that I think a grave matter of this nature should be controlled by the arguments of good sense, before the tribunal of public opinion.

MR. J. GARDINER (Albany): I wish to say a few words that will assist the Commissioner of Railways during the next few hours. No matter how sensible he may be of having exhausted every means to bring this strike to an amicable settlement, the next few hours must be full of anxiety to him, and I think we are acting wisely on this occasion in giving him our assurance that he has the united support of this House in the position in which he has unfortunately been placed. It is very gratifying to me to think that not only does this support come from the member for Albany, but it comes from the Railway Association at Albany. Some six or seven months ago, when I spoke at the railway workshops in Albany I advocated the recognition of their association by the Government, and at the same time I

advised them to use that association and not abuse it. Therefore it is gratifying to me to think that the first use they have made of this privilege is to show they will not come out on strike, and that they condemn this strike altogether. On receipt of that information, I sent a wire saying their conduct was such as should meet with the approval of every fair-thinking man, and that I was sure the action of the Commissioner of Railways was prompted by a desire to do justice and not to oppress. I am sure that will be the sentiment not only of this House but of the whole of the State, in reviewing the steps which the Commissioner has taken. I trust the very moderate and temperate language in this House to-night will have an influence on the decision of those men, showing them that we are prepared as a House to do absolute justice to them, and that we have a right and the Commissioner of Railways has a right to go carefully into the matter to clearly show what the result of that step will be, in order that we may obtain a settlement for all time of these contentious matters with regard to our railways. I am sure the men themselves must desire that for once and all this matter shall be settled; and the only way to settle it is by doing as the Commissioner of Railways suggested, to go carefully into the matter and see that the wages and the hours of labour in the Railway Department are revised for all time. I hope that while the Commissioner of Railways will be extremely firm, this firmness will be tempered with a desire to see these men come back to work; and that he will show that while he has expressed public opinion, there is no desire to humble the men in any way whatever.

MR. C. HARPER (Beverly): It occurs to me that it will be well if the expression of opinion in this House were immediately conveyed to the men who purpose striking. I am sure the expression of opinion all round this House to-night, without one single hint of any opposition to the proposal of the Commissioner of Railways, would have an influence with the men if made known to them, and I think it is our duty to the utmost of our power to give that expression the force it should have. I can only join with others in expressing great gratification at the action taken by those mem-

bers who are supposed especially to represent Labour in this House; and I think we should do all we can to encourage that spirit, and show these members that the whole House is with them in the action they have taken. We can do this by asking the Labour members to communicate to those men who are supposed to go out on strike, that this House is unanimous in its desire and firm in its intention of supporting the Commissioner of Railways. Let them take the whole of the responsibility of flouting the opinion of this House and, I may say, the opinion of the whole independent community in the action they propose to take. I think if that is conveyed to them, it cannot help but have some effect on their action.

MR. R. HASTIE (Kanowna): In reply before closing the question, I should like to say a few words, in the first place to thank hon. members for the many congratulations they have showered on those who sit on this (Labour) bench. I do not know why they should do so. It is apparently because they expected for some reason or other that we would take another course; but I would simply ask them to bear in mind what most of us have been saying in the past, and they will see that our action was not only justified, but was inevitable. As to the matter of this debate, I can only say it has assured us that Parliament is unanimous in its expression of the opinion that the Commissioner of Railways has acted in the only proper manner he possibly could. Parliament has promised to sustain his position in every possible way. I would again repeat this. It may be—in fact I fear it is—too late for the strike to be completely stopped; but, even if it has started, the probable effect of this debate will be that it will not be continued. Several members have pointed out, and I know it myself, that many of the people connected with the railway service who have themselves voted for this strike have, when they have learned the real facts of the case, expressed their regret for having decided to strike; and at the present moment they are doing their utmost to stop the strike. Let us hope that when the men concerned read in the newspapers of the country to-morrow what was said here, they will reconsider the case and decide to follow the example set by those

people in Albany to whom the member for Albany (Mr. J. Gardiner) has just referred, and refuse to be dictated to by a few of their number living in the metropolis. I beg to ask the leave of the House to withdraw the motion for adjournment.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): I should like to make a few remarks before this discussion closes. I was one of those who, in the last Parliament, did a great deal to assist the railway employees of the State; and they should know that now I am one of the Ministry, I desire to do everything I can in fairness to them. The opinion expressed by the House to-night shows distinctly that the Commissioner of Railways has acted wisely and with great discretion. My object in rising is to say that we have with us not only the feeling of this House, but to a great extent the feeling of the people on the goldfields. A telegram has been received here addressed to the Commissioner of Railways, which reads:

The Kalgoorlie Council, at a special meeting to-day, passed the following resolution:—“That this Council, without reference to the merits of the matter in dispute, deprecates the attitude of the railway employees in refusing to submit their grievances to arbitration as proposed by the Commissioner of Railways, and begs to assure him of its hearty support in his endeavours to avert a strike.

I think in the course we are pursuing we shall have the sympathy of all right-minded people in this State; and I hope that before 12 o'clock to-night, wiser counsels will have prevailed with the association, and that the men will see their way clear to accept the proposal made to them by the Commissioner of Railways.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

QUESTION—PUBLIC WORKS, APPOINTMENT OF MR. ATKINS.

MR. DAGLISH asked the Minister for Works: 1, If it was true that Mr. Atkins had been appointed an officer of the Public Works Department? 2, If so, was the engagement a permanent or temporary one? 3, If no member of the Public Service was capable of discharging the duties intrusted to Mr. Atkins? 4, What was the rate of his payment?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1 & 2, No. Mr. Atkins has not

received any Government appointment, but, to oblige the Department, has undertaken to superintend, for about a month, the obtaining of about 2,000 tons of stone from the Collie Quarry for Fremantle Harbour Works. 3, There are several members of the Public Service capable of discharging the duties intrusted to Mr. Atkins, but they are all already more than fully engaged. 4, It is proposed to offer Mr. Atkins remuneration at the rate of £2 per day for the days which he devotes to this work.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE-KALGOORLIE RAILWAY, DUPLICATION.

MR. THOMAS asked the Commissioner of Railways: When the duplication of the line between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, which had been in hand for over twelve months, would be finished?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: The double line between Kalgoorlie and Gunga is now open for traffic. The last section, namely, Gunga to Coolgardie, will be open by Sunday, 14th inst.

QUESTION—ASSEMBLY BENCHES, COMFORT WANTED.

MR. THOMAS asked the Minister for Works: Whether the cross and back benches could not be altered so as to allow members to sit on them with some degree of comfort?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: An officer of the Public Works Department having waited on the hon. the Speaker, it had been decided to alter the cross and back benches during the adjournment, so as to render them more comfortable for seating hon. members.

QUESTION—SCHOOL OF MINES AT COOLGARDIE.

MR. MONGER, for Mr. Morgans, asked the Minister for Mines: If it was the intention of the Government to take immediate steps to establish a School of Mines in Coolgardie, in accordance with the promise of the late Government and the desire of the present Minister for Mines?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES replied: The Government proposed to ask Parliament for a sum sufficient to establish a School of Mines at Coolgardie,

tentatively, as promised by the late Government.

QUESTION—LIVE STOCK AND FROZEN MEAT, INSPECTORS.

MR. GORDON asked the Premier: If there was any inspector or inspectors appointed to enforce Clause 2 under "The Live Stock and Frozen Meat Act, No. 3, 1900." If not, why not?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, The Act does not provide for the appointment of inspectors.

QUESTION—APPLES IMPORTATION, FEDERAL CONDITIONS.

MR. RASON asked the Attorney General: 1, Whether, with the imposition of uniform duties of Customs under the Commonwealth, this State's prohibition of the importation of apples would not cease to be operative? 2, Whether, when uniform duties of customs have been imposed, the Commonwealth Parliament had not the power to annul any import inspection laws of any of the States?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, The prohibition of the importation of apples will cease within the next four days, and consequently long before the imposition of uniform duties by the Federal Government. 2, No; but refer to Section 109 of the Commonwealth Act.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

FOURTH DAY OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. F. WALLACE (Mt. Magnet): As this is the first time I have risen to speak during this session, I desire, as a member who has sat in this House under your rule, Mr. Speaker, during the past four years, to take the opportunity of offering my congratulations on your re-election to the high and responsible position which you now hold as master of this House. It has struck me that it must have been exceedingly gratifying to you to be elected to that position again by a House of this unique composition; and I trust that the new members of the House will share the assurance, which I feel myself, that your occupancy of the Chair will ensure the preservation of the dignity of Parliament. I congratulate you, sir, and trust you will be spared for

many years to rule over us. Now I have a few words to say respecting His Excellency's Speech. I shall deal with the different matters contained in it as concisely as possible, in order that other members who may wish to speak to-night may have an opportunity of doing so and thereby closing, I hope, the debate on the Address-in-reply. I shall now proceed to refer to the composition of this House, which has already been remarked on by other members, and particularly by the member for East Perth (Hon. W. H. James). That hon. member drew attention to the peculiarity, I may say, of the composition of this House, and I think it is a very striking peculiarity indeed to find so many supporters of the Government— I may say their most loyal supporters— sitting on the opposite side of the House. One hon. member explained, in the form of an interjection, that he was not to blame if we did not know on which side of the House he was going to sit.

MR. R. D. HUTCHINSON: No; I said I was not to blame for the opinion of the hon. member then speaking.

MR. WALLACE: I did not mention any name, and it is not my intention to be personal. If my remark fell painfully on any hon. member, I ask forgiveness. I was about to speak on the question of the composition of this House; but now that one hon. gentleman has taken to himself the cap made, I will certainly concede to him the right to wear it, and I will deal with that gentleman and some of the remarks he made in this House within the last evening or two. I shall farther deal with what was until recently looked upon as the only democratic newspaper in this State, a paper printed and circulated in the constituency represented by the member for Geraldton. It appears to me most singular that when the present Ministry were sitting in Opposition, that hon. member sat in Opposition with those gentlemen, myself included—in Opposition to the then Forrest Government. The remnant of the Forrest Government held office for a short while. That gentleman, who then supported the present Ministry, and others who, if they did not sit in Opposition with the present Government, nevertheless marked off their seats with the Opposition—those gentlemen to-day are still found sitting in Opposition. I have been twice returned to this House

as an Oppositionist, but I do not think it was assumed or considered by my constituents that I was to remain on the Opposition benches during the whole term of my parliamentary life. I thought I was returned in opposition to a policy, and I opposed that policy; and when the party of whom I was one got into power, I naturally walked across the floor with them. But in the case of the member for Geraldton, we find him sitting there; and I believe his whole action is based on something that happened during the recent visit of Ministers to Geraldton. The Geraldton people, I know, are most reasonable people; and I admit that the Government which held power in this State for 10 years ill-treated Geraldton, as it did many other ports.

MR. R. D. HUTCHINSON: You will have enough to do to look after Yalgoo. Geraldton will look after itself.

MR. WALLACE: I now desire to plead for Geraldton. I have some friends living there, and am interested in the place, and will therefore, with the permission of the hon. member, proceed to plead for them as far as I can. During the recent visit of members of the Ministry to Geraldton, they were treated and feasted in a manner for which the Geraldton people are famous. The hospitality of Geraldton is unbounded; and unbounded hospitality was showered on Ministers, and on the hon. gentleman who accompanied them.

A MEMBER: Did they take them to the Club?

MR. WALLACE: But I believe the Geraldton constituency, like every other constituency, wanted nothing until the Ministers arrived there. Then requests were made to various Ministers for the granting of sums of money to be spent on certain works; and I have it on authority that Ministers were unkind enough to refuse to give to Geraldton all the money it asked for. The people of Geraldton were angry, and that democratic paper, the *Geraldton Express*, wrote that "For years Geraldton, at some sacrifice, had sent to the Assembly a representative to stand side by side with the old Opposition in exposing the mistakes and maladministration of the Forrest party, and to assist in pushing forward those democratic reforms necessary

to secure fair and impartial administration." Now, it is admitted by this organ, issued in the constituency of Geraldton, that it was necessary to support this party for the purpose of throwing out of power a Government guilty of "mistakes and maladministration." Yet to-day we find the representative of that constituency supporting the remnants of that party of maladministration and mistakes. These circumstances have brought me to my feet and forced me to express my opinion of the composition of this House. I believe it is probable that the Ministry will suffer through that composition; I believe some attempt will be made to accept the challenge thrown out by the Premier; because the democratic paper I have previously mentioned has itself declared that "there was little doubt if this was the kind of justice that was to be laddled out to them by the new Government, it would lean upon a very weak reed if it relied on retaining the sympathy and good will of the people of Geraldton." I understand that "the kind of justice" mentioned relates to the unkindness of the Ministry in refusing to grant sums of money not required for urgent works. I consider there is great necessity for caution and economy. I have as the representative of my district asked for sums of money which I did not get, but nevertheless I intend to continue to sit behind the Ministry and support them strongly. In regard to the unique composition of this House, it must seem strange to you, sir, to find, after the years you have presided over the Assembly, that we have for the first time a democratic Government. The people of the State have been howling and fighting for it for years, and at last they have obtained it. There is a Conservative Opposition, and there is also, I have been told, a third party. I was pleased indeed when the Premier threw down the gauntlet, because I feel that we are sitting in a very uncertain position, and I am more than ever impressed with the fact that the Conservative party who held power in this House for 10 years previous to this session felt and recognised that the time had come when the country was as tired of them as it was possible for the population of any State to be tired of a Ministry. The late Government know the value placed upon them by the people of the State, consequently they

have no farther ambition to get on to these Treasury benches, and they have assured the Premier they will give him all the support they can. I think the Premier invited them to step across this way, but it was said the Government would have a long term of office because of the loyal support promised them by members on the other side of the House. To get to one or two subjects in the Governor's Speech, I am only going to refer to them just in passing. There are many subjects mentioned in it, and many matters I have heard in the different speeches of Ministers during the last month or six weeks, which I am proud to say the Government intend to take in hand. Prominent amongst these measures is electoral reform, and at the last general election I promised to urge and naturally support electoral reform such as that mentioned by the Premier the other evening. All adults of this State should possess electoral rights or electors' rights—I do not know which term will be adopted yet—and that is a system of voting which I believe will be popular throughout the State. I presume it will enable the holders of such rights to vote wherever they may wish. At present it is a question of voting only in those districts in which you are registered. Further, I hope that the Government will recognise the injustice of the property qualification for the election of members of the Upper House. I ask that the qualification for the two Houses shall be made equal. The Commonwealth Constitution distinctly lays down that the same qualification shall prevail for both Houses of the Federal Parliament, and I would ask why should not the same conditions apply to our local Parliament?

MR. JACOBY: The Government do not propose that in the Speech.

MR. WALLACE: Plural voting has not been abolished. During the reign of the late Government it was mooted that it would be done away with, but it was put in under the blind of absent voting, and we found the same evil existing during the last general election as existed all through the elections for some years past. On the question of mining reform I have heard from the Minister for Mines that he intends to give every assistance to alluvial prospectors. I have here some notes I

made during the last election. I advocated aid to prospectors, both alluvial and reefing, in the way of abolition of rent and survey fees for a period of from six to 12 months. I believe it is the intention of the Minister for Mines to introduce some such aid as that. I also alluded to the question of deep sinking, and I would urge the immediate provision of boring apparatus for testing the lodes, and also the alluvial deposits. I believe that just now the number of diamond drills belonging to the State is very small, and it is a question of passing two or three diamond drills right round the mining centres, so that some will have to wait two or three years before they get one. Provision of that sort would be one form of assistance, or one form of extending the present revenue-producing channel of the mining department. Not only should diamond drills be provided, but in some places—and I suggest that this would apply to my own locality—even a hand-drill might be sufficient to test the shallow alluvial deposits. In one portion of the district I have the honour to represent, the Mt. Magnet district, there are large bodies of concentrates which cannot be treated by the ordinary means of battery and cyanide, and I urge the erection of State smelters at Geraldton in accordance with that view. I saw a portion of a report by Mr. Woodward the Geologist, and Mr. Lightly the Mining Inspector, who went to the Northampton district with a view of inspecting and reporting on the lodes said to exist there, and I regret to note that the report furnished was condemnatory. To my knowledge, obtained from Mr. Mitchell, the former member for the Murchison, the present workings of those mines have been flooded, and it is impossible for anyone to determine the size or extent of the lodes. In the portion of the report I read, Mr. Woodward said the conclusion at which he arrived was based upon information given him by sons of men who worked there 30 or 40 years ago. I hope the Minister for Mines will not rest on his oars as to the report of those gentlemen, but will make farther inquiry, and will send a diamond drill to the Northampton district with a view of testing the extent of the lodes in that locality. It is neces-

sary and urgent in the interests of the gold-mining centres beyond Geraldton—those on the Murchison—that we should have some special plant for concentrates. I urge the Government to give some consideration to the Murchison goldfields. I will join with the member for Geraldton (Mr. Hutchinson), and say that we, too, have been sadly neglected during the past seven or eight years, but I have not sworn that I will oppose this Government because the past Government neglected us. The question of the Midland Railway has been brought forward, and this also was a sore subject with my friend the member for Geraldton. All through the debate in this House and on the hustings, I never condemned the Midland Railway Company as a railway company. I am not going to assert that the Midland railway as a railway is a good one, but I think it quite as good as the Government railways. If we leave Perth on Monday morning we get to Geraldton on Monday night, but if we leave Geraldton on Monday night we never know when we are going to get to Cue. I consider the Midland Railway Company deserving of a certain amount of condemnation in regard to their land settlement policy, and I believe the reason why the member for Geraldton has avowed opposition to this Ministry is that the Ministry does not accede to the request of the Geraldton people and make an immediate purchase of the Midland railway.

A MEMBER : It was a gaol they wanted.

MR. WALLACE : No. I hope the time is not far distant when the Ministry will see their way to take from the hands of the present company the line and all their concessions, not only for the sake of the running of the trains from Perth to Walkaway, but because within the next two or three years it will be urgently necessary to give a fuel supply to the Murchison. The firewood supply naturally is giving out daily, as everyone knows, and now, with the absence of rolling-stock on the railways, and the distance we have to go for firewood, it is becoming almost impossible to work mines unless they are of a high grade. We have locked up on the Irwin a coal seam which was opened up 12 or 13 years ago by a syndicate, and then proved to be good coal, said to be quite equal to

the Collie coal at the present time. While I have no desire to interfere with the rights of the Collie coal people in their markets, it must be clear to those people that we, on the Murchison, cannot be expected to get all our coal from Collie when we have a coal supply right in our very midst. The Government should take action with the Midland Railway Company to obtain possession of the whole of their concession, because many sections of the community want the land taken over, and the Murchison people, representing the mining industry, urgently require the fuel supply which is now locked up in the Irwin district. I think it is laid down in the Governor's Speech that the Ministry intend to amend the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. I am pleased we have sitting on the back benches here gentlemen who are conversant with the necessary reforms of this Act, and who will be a great acquisition to this Parliament in framing a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill which will be found workable, because I understand now that the present Act is of no use at all, and members who sat in this House during the last session of the last Parliament will recollect how it was that such a measure was passed. Members then sitting in Opposition were actually intimidated to support the Bill, and the Bill was rushed through to satisfy a certain section of the people. I hope the amending Bill will not be held back beyond this session, if it is possible to introduce it, and that it will be brought in early. With the policy generally of the Government I am thoroughly in accord. I admitted a moment ago that there was necessity for caution and economy, and if the Government err at all, as I have repeatedly said to some of the Ministers, I hope they will err on the side of economy. It must be clear from the statements which have been placed before the country by members of the present Government, that the finances require straightening out, as the member for Northam said, and, consequently, the present Ministers are not in a position to put forth a policy of public works, which was a policy so much in favour during the last few years.

MR. D. J. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): I desire to add to the many congratulations which you, Mr. Speaker,

have already received, mine also, which are equally sincere, if not so lengthy. I also feel especially the loss of the late member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), because his adventurous spirit and his noble deeds of exploration in the Kimberley country gave me the opportunity of acquiring some profitable properties I have now the pleasure of enjoying; and if hon. members will look at the diary which the late Mr. Forrest kept as an explorer, they will understand what a noble and disinterested man he was. I also regret that in the speeches delivered in this House during this session, no mention has been made of the late Premier (Sir John Forrest). Many members now here may differ from him in regard to the policy he pursued in endeavouring to develop the resources of this country; but still, in a friendly way, we all should recognise that he was a good friend, if he was also at times a strong opponent. It is the duty of this House to record the sympathy which members must feel with him in the loss he has lately sustained, and also our feeling in regard to many acts of kindness we received individually from him during his career in this House. The present Premier (Hon. G. Leake) has put to us the question why we, the stronger party in this House, are prepared to sit in opposition to his Government and allow him to carry on the affairs of the country. He asks us the reason why, and we tell him we thought it was necessary the finances of this country should be made known to those members who were formerly sitting in Opposition; also that we on this side have a personal regard for the present leader of the Government, and are pleased to see him on that side of the House, for we think that if put there he would learn to understand what responsibility is, and that if at a future time he should return to the cold shades of Opposition, his character would be so changed that he would not be as flippant as we have known him in the past, but would take his position seriously and understand the responsibility attaching to it. When he sat on this side of the House as leader of the Opposition, he was ignorant of these responsibilities, therefore he treated them with a certain amount of scorn; but I believe now that if at some future time he once more takes his old place on the Opposition side, he

will treat the members who will then be in the Government with more respect than he treated the previous Government, and that he will treat the country with more respect also by showing that he is earnest in his desire to assist the Government of the day in doing good, instead of ridiculing them. The *Morning Herald* has told us the "leading actor" came out, in last night's debate. But surely we do not want an "actor" in the Premier. We want a man who is sincere in all he says and in all he does. There is a great cry from almost every member on the Government benches, that they have all the debating power on that side of the House. We say they have. We also say they have behind them the will of the people, because those members represent the desire of the people by sitting on the Government side of the House. Suppose we grant them that, what more do they claim? One member has said they have all the intelligence on that side: we will even grant them that. But why when they have all these boons—this combination of popularity, and the will of the people, and the intelligence, and the debating power—why do they growl at our having a few more members on this (Opposition) side of the House? (General laughter.) Members on that side remind me of a story which some of them may have read, a tale told by Maxwell, which tends to show how a clergyman borrowed a congregation. It was in the south of Ireland, and the parish priest and the church of England parson became very great friends, their friendship probably being brought about because they were the only two congenial fellows in the place. But the congregation attending the English church strongly objected to the parson's intimacy with the Catholic priest of the parish; and so strong became their objection to this continued intimacy that the congregation sent a round-robin to the bishop of the diocese, complaining bitterly of the parson's conduct and saying they would leave the church if such conduct continued. They did leave the church, and wrote the bishop telling him what they had done. Then the bishop gave notice to his clergyman that he would come down on a certain Sunday and see for himself what was the position of affairs in the parish. The parson, on

receiving this notice, went to his friend the Catholic priest and told his complaint. "Och!" said the priest, "you wait quietly till Sunday, and I think I can settle the whole business for you." Sunday came; the parson came too, but there was no congregation in the English church. There was a very large congregation in the Catholic church; and the priest addressing his people said, "You all go quietly down to the English church and attend the service there for this Sunday, and say nothing about it." Well, before the service in the English church could begin, the place became so crowded that the parson had to put up the usual notice: "Standing room only." The bishop, who was attending the service to see for himself, left the building arm-in-arm with the parson at the close of the service, expressing his great delight at all that he saw. The members of that congregation wrote again to the bishop, but he did not listen to their complaints; for he replied that having visited the parish and seen things for himself, he had not only seen in the English church one of the largest congregations he ever witnessed, but he must also say it was one of the most respectable congregations, because at the entrance to the church they all bowed to him. The bishop added (in the words of the newspapers): "This correspondence must stop." Now we, the members of the congregation on this side of the House, will lend to you over there a few from our side, and lift you out of the awkward position you are in now. Looking round these benches, I think a few quiet gentlemen might be sent over to you; say the member for the Murray (Mr. George)—he might suit you; and there is the member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby), also the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond). These members from our side, if the *Morning Herald* will allow you to take them, would about balance the two sides, and in the future there might be less complaints from that side about not having sufficient members. (General laughter.) We have in this country to face a very great difficulty, that of carrying on our railway service. The trouble is said to lie on the head of the late Government; but do not hon. members recollect that the gentleman now occupying the position of Commissioner of Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes)

was the very man who formerly held up to ridicule the responsible officers of the Railway Department, and made the servants of that department disrespectful towards their officers? It was he who brought into serious contempt the men who were responsible for the working of our railways; and I know that he alone has been responsible and is responsible for the present position of the railway servants. It is no answer to try and put the blame on the shoulders of the late Premier (Hon. G. Throssell). The true explanation rather is that the "chickens have come home to roost," and the man who hatched them has now to rear them.

MR. GEORGE: A regular incubator!

MR. DOHERTY: We have in our railways one of the greatest assets that any country ever possessed. No colony in Australia started its railway system in such favourable conditions as have prevailed in regard to the railway system of Western Australia. In the first instance, the construction has cost only £4,000 a mile as against £12,000 a mile in any other colony in Australia; and with such cheap construction we should be able to make this one of the greatest trading concerns, not only in this State but in the whole of Australia. It only requires the railways to be taken away from political control and political interference to have again one of the finest assets ever possessed in a new country. On what particular lines the railways are to be managed is for the House to decide, whether there shall be a Commissioner or Commissioners. Experiences teaches, and on this subject it teaches us that once the railways of a State have been taken out of political control and placed under the management of men responsible to the country, and having a free hand to manage them on commercial principles, those railways have changed from a losing to a dividend-paying concern.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: That is not correct.

MR. DOHERTY: Well, take the railways in New South Wales as an example, for I know the hon. gentleman will not go to the rotten State of Victoria for a political example. If the railways of this State were placed under a Commissioner, and if we passed an Act of Parliament for controlling the working of those railways, giving power to the

Commissioner to make such rates as he might think necessary for commercial purposes, and providing that no particular party or section of the community or class of goods shall be favoured, and giving to the Commissioner the full control of rates, I think this would be the first step towards making the railways of this State a paying concern. In the first place, we should place in our Act a schedule, classifying the men employed and the wages to be paid, and not leaving it in the power of anyone to reduce a man unnecessarily or to favour one by promoting him to a position which he was not fitted to fill. This would give encouragement to the men to be loyal to the department, and would give encouragement to all the public servants to be more loyal, if such a thing is possible. Again, a man who has faithfully and loyally served the country for 20 or 25 years should, at the expiration of that time, in return for his loyal services, be provided with a pension, so that he in his days of age may live without effort and in quiet. After serving the State loyally and faithfully he should not in his old age become a pauper, or a pensioner on pauperism. He should receive a pension for the loyal work he has done for the State during his lifetime. This great system of pensions would bind a man so stringently to carry out his duties well that in no instance would he dare to endanger his future by any recklessness of the moment. It would make this railway system one of the finest in Australia; and the cheap capital cost of it would leave it in such a position that it would recoup us the very great financial loss we are going to suffer by entering the federation of the Australian colonies. I am pleased at the earliest act of the present Government, which represents the first step towards dividing the Railway Department from the Public Works Department. The new Administration have started at the right end in giving each of these departments a separate responsible representative in the Cabinet. That one step alone will be a benefit to the working of the railways and a benefit to the administration of the Public Works Department. I am brought to this point by the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, published a few days ago, which I read very carefully. It seems to me

that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark, when the man who manages the railways, which are a freighting concern, is also allowed to construct them. It appears to me, as the report puts it, that though a man may be able to drive an engine, he may not be able to design one. It seems to me in the same way that a man may be able to manage a large business but he could not design the architecture of a building in which that business is to be carried on. Therefore, put the railways under a Commission, and let the Commissioners be responsible only for the goods traffic and the coach traffic; and so we shall have good management in those departments. But take that care and trouble which are inseparable from the construction of new lines and additions to old lines entirely away from the Commission; make those things the work of a separate department; and we shall find—

THE PREMIER: We have done it.

MR. DOHERTY: Already?

THE PREMIER: The Speech suggests it.

MR. DOHERTY: Yes; but you have not carried it into effect yet. There is a separate department controlled by the General Manager of Railways as a subordinate branch, and I believe the chief of that department is Mr. Dartnall.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They must keep up that branch for works.

MR. DOHERTY: Who controls it?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Engineer for Existing Lines.

MR. DOHERTY: But does it include the construction of new lines? I say no money for expenditure should be allowed to be handled by the Railway Department.

THE PREMIER: That is the alteration we are making.

MR. DOHERTY: I thought that your intelligence would grasp it, because this report is very definite and brings the point to finality:—

I would therefore again strongly urge that a definite and final decision be come to as soon as possible as to whether it is to be the Construction Department of the Government or the officers working the Railways who shall have charge of the expenditure of the loan and other funds provided for the construction of new railways and additions to the opened

railways, as the worry and irritation arising out of the existing condition of things are becoming unbearable —

That is from the Engineer-in-Chief.

A MEMBER: He has said that for some years, you know.

MR. DOHERTY:—

and are militating most distinctly against the best interests of the Government and the country.

Now why should the best interests of the Government and the country be sacrificed by maintaining the existing state of affairs?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Alterations are being made daily.

MR. DOHERTY: Well I am pleased at that, and the Government deserve the thanks not only of this House, but of the country at large. Now there are certain items which require explanation. The first occasion on which attention was drawn to them was in the course of a speech by the then Premier at the time of the discussion on the vote for improvements, additions, etc., to opened lines and heavy rails for the Northam-Kalgoorlie line. Has that money been spent, or is the amount for rolling-stock now on order?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes.

MR. DOHERTY: Well now, what has become of the money previously voted by the House for rails alone? What has become of that?

THE PREMIER: You had better ask your leader.

MR. DOHERTY: There was a sum of £100,000 for rails filched by the Railway Department from the Public Works Department, and never accounted for. The management of the railways said to the Public Works Department, "We want to borrow a certain quantity of rails, which we will repay." The Railway Department carried out the contract faithfully in one respect—by borrowing the rails; but they never returned them. Now, there is an instance which I think points distinctly to mismanagement on the part of the railway people in spending money; and we have another most forcible proof of that in the Boulder duplication. For five miles of railway you will find by the Loan Bill of 1899, if you turn it up, we were, in the first place, asked for £20,000. At that time members thought it was a

very large sum of money; but it was voted, and evidently it has been spent. In the Loan Bill of 1900 you will find another £20,000 asked for. Of course the House granted that, and it seems to have gone away. If we turn up the speech of our late Premier we find he states that £40,000 is required to finish that line, and possibly more. £40,000! That is £80,000 for five miles of railway, or £16,000 per mile, when the original cost of construction was £1,500 per mile.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER : Ask the late Premier how he accounts for it.

MR. DOHERTY : Well, it is one of many things you all seem to have had a hand in by accepting the position. If you will listen for a moment, I will explain my standpoint. I am only seeking in the dark for knowledge. It is one of those peculiar matters which point directly to mismanagement of the Railway Department in spending money which should have been in the hands of, and should have been accounted for by, the Public Works Department. Now in Burt street, one of the principal streets of Boulder city, there is a magnificent arch, if you please, costing thousands of pounds, built of brick. While we have any amount of our own jarrah timber, still for some reason they must spend thousands of pounds on a brick arch.

THE PREMIER : Where is it?

MR. DOHERTY : In Burt street, Boulder city.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : Unfortunately, it is not there yet.

MR. DOHERTY : This is my point, that it would repay the House to devote its time only to the one Government concern of the railways. If we devoted our time only to our railways we would do very good work for this country. I may tell you I was pleased with the opening Address. It did not contain an elaborate announcement of legislation to be put through; but I thought I could read between the lines that the present Government were going to do their best to put our railway system on a very safe, solid, and sound basis.

A MEMBER : You are on the wrong side.

MR. DOHERTY : I am often on the wrong side, my friend.

THE PREMIER : It doesn't matter where you sit so long as you talk like that.

MR. DOHERTY : If you will remember, during the last session we were told that the entire amount of money that had been spent on our railways up to that date had been seven millions of money. That expenditure of seven millions of money has been returning to the consolidated revenue of this State something like £163,000 annually. Remember, on a capital value of seven millions, the railways are returning to the Treasury something like £163,000. Now, I was fully aware that a million of money was to be spent during the current year on the railways, and this would have brought their capital cost up to eight millions. But I am astounded when I hear the General Manager state—and his statement is indorsed by the new Commissioner of Railways—that the total amount of the capital expenditure on our railways is nine millions. What will be the profit to the State on a capital value of nine millions?

THE PREMIER : It is more than that.

MR. DOHERTY : Here comes a very serious question for this State to deal with. On a capital value of seven millions the railways paid into the State revenue £163,000. With a capital value of nine millions—a two millions increase—they will not pay £100,000 into the coffers of the State. Now, it is a serious affair, a serious difficulty, and the leakage should be discovered before we return to our constituents. I say it is the first duty of the Commissioner of Railways, backed by his Government, to let us know where the leakage is. It is marvellous. If you will refer to page 15 of the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, you will find it stated that the ratio of working expenses to gross receipts runs up from 49.79 per cent. in 1895 and 1896 to 68.4 in 1899 and 1900. The latter is a year back 68.4 per cent. of working expenses! And let me tell the House that this is not the worst feature in the printed statement before us. The working expenses were made out at the end of the financial year, which I believe ends on the 30th of June, and it appears that for the last year, that is from June, 1900, to July, 1901, the amount is no less than 78 per cent. That is a jump of 10 per cent. in the working expenses in one year. Is not that so? I think I am perfectly

correct in my statement. If I am not correct, the gentlemen in occupation of the Treasury benches will set me right, they being in possession of the facts. I make the statement that the working expenses have gone up 10 per cent. in one year.

THE PREMIER: Under the new Government?

MR. DOHERTY: No. I use these arguments so that if they are wrong they may be refuted by those in power. If they are right, the country should know immediately that these things will be put straight. I hope we shall have, some time before the next sitting of the House, a statement on the railways, and information showing how these changes are to come about, because if we continue this rotten policy of putting all the money we borrow into capital, and capitalising that money on the railways, running it up, and then paying back into the State coffers the small amount of revenue we receive, we must become eventually, so far as our railways are concerned, practically insolvent. If in any ordinary trading business a man had a capital of say £1,000, and he made on that capital say 10 per cent., the profit would be £100, but if by some means he became the fortunate possessor of about £400,000, and put that into his business, then the larger amount would, at the same percentage, produce £4,000; but the credit which should be obtained on account of that large sum of money would enable him to so increase the earnings that the percentage of profit would be not 10 per cent. only, but probably $12\frac{1}{2}$ or 15 per cent. The reverse ratio exists in the railways. The more capital we put in, the smaller is the actual amount we receive back into the coffers of the State, and it is a grave question, because in such a young country as this, with the railways cheaply constructed, we have one of the greatest assets a young country outside England ever possessed; and I say that if the railways are properly managed and equipped, the State from this source will make up the loss we sustain through the Customs by our entering into the Commonwealth. I may tell the House—and probably appeal to the younger members of the House—that when first I became a member I thought I would set up for myself some particular model which I could put in a quiet niche, and

that I would follow the example set by that great model. I picked out from all the members assembled a young and earnest democrat, the representative for East Perth (Hon. W. H. James). Of course I never hoped to reach the high tone of eloquence possessed by the hon. member, and I do not think eloquence always necessary for good legislation; but I felt that if I could only mould myself slightly on the model I should do some good to the country. The great doctrine preached by the young democrat in this Assembly was that party government was the curse of a very young State.

HON. W. H. JAMES: I supported that principle for four years.

MR. DOHERTY: You deserted me at the last moment, and the apostle has now become the teacher. As I have said, I set up this model, and I always paid attention to the great and earnest way in which he preached that particular doctrine. After four years of constantly hearing him and paying the utmost attention to his words, I at last became a convert to his way of thinking.

A MEMBER: You kept over there (Government side).

MR. DOHERTY: When the opportunity comes, I shall no longer be a party man. I think party politics must be the ruin of a young, democratic, rising country, though my friend, as I told him just now, deserted me, and I regret it very much, for I should like to have had him as a friend, adviser, and a model still to follow in the paths he so early indicated in my political career. He has left me, and it is now for me to champion non-party politics. While I sit on this side of the House, that will be my course, and if the Ministry now in power bring in those measures which are for the benefit of the people of the State, they shall have my unreserved support; not in the jeering way my friend the Premier referred to last night, in no way truckling to him, but in the honest conviction that their measures will be for the improvement and advancement of the State.

HON. W. H. JAMES: The country is suspicious. As a non-party man, you do not belong to them.

MR. DOHERTY: Of course I could not always follow the member in his domestic legislation, for he was not always in this House, but was in the

bosom of his family, and I had no opportunity of finding out what policy he enunciated there. He always followed the tactics of De Wet, who fired off his gun and "cleared." We had no chance of finding him. If we tried to find him, he would be in the reserves of Peppermint Grove. There were some strong arguments pointing out that farm labour was rather scarce in Western Australia. I made an interjection last night, and though it was not taken seriously, I want it to be. A large number of able and strong men who have been our enemies for some time are now in our prisons, and I do not see why they should not come to this State. I refer to the Boers who are now in Ceylon. They are good farmers, and why not bring them here and set them on our land? Let them come, and, as is the case with all people who associate with the British race, they will become Britishers; they will be our strongest friends, and build up in this country a noble and an agricultural people.

MR. RESIDE: And be chained?

MR. DOHERTY: I thought the policy of the Labour party was to advocate liberty. These enemies have been in a fair fight, and have gone down, and why should we put them in chains?

MR. RESIDE: That is what you do in the North-West.

MR. DOHERTY: I have never been in the North-West and I have no interest there, so the gentleman's retort comes without a sting to me. Of course I cannot understand the attitude of the present Premier with reference to the apple question. I agree with him on that, but why was the hon. gentleman such a convert on this apple question, seeing he was such a bitter opponent to allowing cheap meat to come from the north of this country, out of fear of tick, this tick which was to decimate the small farmers, but which really only existed in the imagination of the hon. gentleman? He was against receiving those cattle when the Premier of that day thought their introduction would relieve the people down here by cheapening the price of food. But when it came to the codlin moth, that was only an insect that would do no harm, if particularly watched over. I do not object to the apples coming in, but I should like an explanation from the

Premier with regard to inconsistency of policy as to the tick on the one hand, and the codlin moth on the other. I feel sure that he was playing for popularity, and I hope that popularity satisfied him. However, the action taken in order to cheapen fruit certainly meets with my approval. There was a sort of Napoleonic strain right through the Premier's action last night. There was a kind of "this is magnificent, but not war," because we treated the policy in a quiet, sensible, and legitimate way. On this side of the House he was always fighting and trying to block things, and he thought we ought to fight. We recognised that in the measures he is bringing forward he is going to do good to the country. He is not satisfied that we do not have a fight, but that is not the idea of non-party government.

HON. W. H. JAMES: Who are "we."

MR. DOHERTY: The gentlemen who surround these (Opposition) benches.

HON. W. H. JAMES: Oh!

MR. DOHERTY: I told you I am an apostle of yours. The Premier also in a sneering sort of way referred to the women's franchise and the manner in which the women voted at the last election. He sneeringly suggested that we were elected by the votes of the women. When he detracts from women who have voted, he detracts and casts reflections upon those from whom we sprang. If women are good enough to train us and to educate us in that religion in which we all believe, they are good enough to vote, and we have no right in this House or in any other place to sneeringly remark upon the votes cast by the women of this State. They possess their vote for their womanhood, as the men possess theirs for their manhood.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear, and I was not sneering.

MR. DOHERTY: It may be your perpetual sneer. We on the Opposition side of the House did not refer in any scathing terms to that tour of the Colonial Treasurer's, because we felt he had made an error, and we did not care to make too much of any political error at the outset of his Ministerial career. It appears to me the Colonial Treasurer, whether in the position of leader of the Opposition or holding the rank of a Cabinet Minister, always requires a mentor in his travels

through this State. The first one he had now occupies a seat on the Treasury benches—I refer to the Minister for Works (Hon. H. W. Kingsmill); and strange to say, during the tour referred to the speeches of that gentleman bristled with witticisms. It was then that the hon. gentleman made his famous joke: "The bell rang, the jarrah blocks came in, and they all sang out, 'Where's Jack?'" On this occasion the Colonial Treasurer thought a member from the goldfields should have the opportunity of acting as his mentor, and no doubt our classical friend the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) quite understood the duties of mentor, but he most sadly neglected them. He must have been out in that weary country with that wonderful prospector who travelled one hundred miles a day on a bike, and he left the Treasurer looking on the wine that sparkled, returning thanks for the toast, and telling the people in that portion of the State that the Government—not that "corrupt Government," because if he had said that he would have had to apologise, but that old Government whom the people were tired of, the Forrest Government—had the opportunity and could have bought the Midland railway property for a million of money, when it was worth £1,300,000, and added that after the company heard the disclosures they would certainly want £1,500,000. That is a curious way for a responsible Minister to act, and I can understand the Premier saying "What will the Opposition fellows think when they read this"? and I can understand a telegram being sent by the Premier to his colleague to this effect: "Oh, Frederick, what have you done"? and, when Frederick had returned, and had cooled his head and returned to political consciousness, or rather righteousness I mean, would say, "Lord have mercy on my political soul." We do not want to criticise those things: we do not want to put the Government out.

MR. GARDINER: You can't.

MR. DOHERTY: There is no such word in the English language as "can't."

MR. GARDINER: Try.

MR. DOHERTY: I must tell my friend that there is no such word in the English language as "can't." If there had been, the English people would not

be in the position they are in to-day. The Colonial Treasurer did not tell us how he intended to pay the Midland Railway Company this £1,500,000, and I have no doubt the Colonial Treasurer and his *fidus achates* or mentor, or whatever we may call him, oftentimes dreamed dreams and saw visions of huge land sales, corner blocks, and residential sites; that oftentimes these dimmed his vision, and led the Colonial Treasurer to make those unnecessary, unwise and unpolitical statements. The House would have liked at the outset of the debate to have heard a correct, unbiased, and truthful statement of the finances of this State. Why should it be left to individuals in the State who have not access to the papers and the documents, to make statements which may or may not be true? The gentleman at the head of affairs surely has all the figures at his control, and all the necessary means of compiling such statements.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Not yet.

HON. W. H. JAMES: Ask the late Premier.

MR. DOHERTY: I have here a statement by the late Premier.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I want to give you correct figures, and when I do they will not be those.

MR. DOHERTY: If the hon. gentleman had remained in town at his desk instead of going through the country, probably we should have had the result of those figures now. I looked forward to many reforms when the Government took office, but they have gone jaunting through the country towns and spending the Government money on functions. I may say that I have never taken part in any of those functions. I thought I should be better able to meet my constituents by not joining in these junketings, and for that reason I never attended any of those functions which have been held at the country's expense.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: We paid our own expenses.

MR. DOHERTY: If you did, that will not excuse you. The country pays you and expects you to remain at home in Perth at your office.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: But we went to see the country and make ourselves acquainted with it.

MR. DOHERTY: After the session that would have been fair. The Ministry went through the country to receive the admiration of the people, and it would have been better if they had remained at their offices in Perth, and then they might have been able to give us the figures which we want.

HON. W. H. JAMES: The public receptions have made you annoyed.

MR. DOHERTY: Not in the slightest. It appears to me that we should know at the earliest possible date what the actual financial position of the country is. According to the list which I have here, and which is a statement made by the late Premier, the country has been committed to three millions of money for which no authorisation has been provided. That is the position and it is a very serious one. If I judge rightly I should say that of these three million pounds, at the present there is one million of it to boot, and the Government will have to find one million pounds within the next three months. I may be wrong, if so the Colonial Treasurer can correct me. To carry out these works it is necessary that the present Government should come down at once with a Loan Bill so that they can get the money at the most convenient time, and on the most convenient terms. Economy will have to be practised if our finances are in such a bad way. If we are in such straitened circumstances, then we may be able to knock off some of the public works which I see on the list provided by the late Ministry: there are many items that could conveniently be cut out. There are the railway workshops, £400,000; why not cut that sum out? Why not stop those works? why pledge ourselves to unnecessary works at this moment? We have carried on for years with the works at our disposal, and why should it be necessary to spend this money now, which will be the means of starving more necessary works out.

MR. RASON: You know why.

MR. RESIDE: You agreed to it.

MR. DOHERTY: I never did so. There is the Cue to Nannine railway: we could do away with that. The Boulder duplication—I do not know whether it is within the province of the Ministry to stop the unnecessary rush of expenditure on that line. I suppose it is necessary

to complete the Leonora railway. But there is the item for the development of the goldfields: that could very well be cut out. It amounts to £160,000. Private enterprise is developing the goldfields as far as is necessary. Then for public batteries there is a sum of £60,000: that could be cut out. The development of agriculture, £20,000: knock that out. A million of money at least could be knocked out to the advantage of our public credit, and the sooner we establish our public credit the better for the State, and not tinker with it. We should not be afraid to cut out works which will not interfere with our credit on the English market.

HON. W. H. JAMES: What about Fremantle—can you cut anything out there?

MR. DOHERTY: If you cut out the amount mentioned for the Fremantle Harbour Works—well, that harbour is the gate of the State, and it will interfere with the development of the whole country. It appears from this statement that onward from the present year to 1902, we shall have to raise something like two millions of money—two millions of money! It is a serious position to be in, because I do not see how our credit will stand such a large drain as two millions of money in so short a time.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Who put us in that position?

MR. DOHERTY: May I make a suggestion to the Colonial Treasurer? For years past there always seems to have been a mixing up of the consolidated revenue in voting certain sums in detail for certain works. These sums, I think, should rather have been included in one amount. The sums might be ear-marked for the particular works; but their total should be in one amount on the consolidated revenue, to pass over into the Public Works Loan Act. If the Colonial Treasurer will follow me—and the reason I have for urging this is probably one that will appeal to him—it sometimes happens that money is provided out of the consolidated revenue for certain works which may not be begun for perhaps six months; and necessarily during the first half of the year we are constantly showing a credit balance, and the people say "Oh, we are doing splendidly! Here month after month is a credit balance after expenses are paid."

There is a credit each month, certainly ; but the works that are provided for in the consolidated revenue come in all of a heap after the lapse of six months. Then for the ensuing half-year there is a loss, a debit. In that way our financial credit is injured.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER : How is it to be remedied ?

MR. DOHERTY : It can be remedied. The Colonial Treasurer should see that the amount allotted out of the consolidated revenue for the year to the Public Works Department is paid month by month to that Department.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER : Would not that be giving big patronage to the Public Works Department ?

MR. DOHERTY : You already do that. You book the same amount of money, but under different circumstances.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER : We ear-mark it.

MR. DOHERTY : But you ear-mark it in the same way for roads and bridges.

THE PREMIER : The method is in use in the Eastern States.

MR. DOHERTY : I am greatly obliged for that information ; I shall look further into it. I do not think it is necessary for me to urge, as I believe the policy has already been enunciated by the Colonial Treasurer, that the proceeds from the sale of Crown lands made or created by the advance of public works should not go into the general revenue funds, but should be credited as a sinking fund for the reduction of our public debt. It is for public works we borrow money on the credit of our State ; and the public works having created the value of that land, I think the loan account should be credited with the proceeds of sales of such lands, and the amount should appear as a sinking fund for the reduction of our public debt. I think the suggestion is one worthy of the Colonial Treasurer's attention, even at this late hour. I wish now simply to express the hope that to-morrow morning we shall hear of better results in regard to the railway trouble and that the unanimity which has characterised this House will have a beneficial effect on the men ; so that the anxiety which seems to hang over us all will be dispelled. It will be due to all sides of the House, but particularly to the seven

gentlemen occupying Labour seats, if the strike is settled. We might have expected our friend who has constituted himself the leader of the Labour party—because no gentleman in the House has had so varied an experience from such different positions in the House as he has had—

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : What about your gem ?

MR. DOHERTY : The Minister for Public Works, in speaking of the member for Boulder, characterised him as "a perfect gem." It was quite a mystery to me why he did, although of course I thought it was right, seeing that the member for Boulder sits on the Government side of the House. I asked for an explanation of the term, and it was pointed out to me that a perfect gem is cut with 256 faces. I thought that hardly went far enough, because to represent the member for Boulder adequately would require 365 faces, or one for every day in the year. Finally, at this very late hour, Mr. Speaker, I must apologise to you for my neglect of that phrase which is necessary to the honour of the Chair ; but I have been, I assure you, addressing so many public meetings of late that I had forgotten the phrase which is due as a mark of respect to the Chair. I thank hon. members for the cordial and kindly manner in which they have listened to me.

MR. R. HASTIE (Kanowna) : The hon. member who has just sat down struck, I believe, a responsive chord in his reference to the desirability of non-party government. I believe that everyone of us is fully convinced that it is possible for people under certain circumstances simply to support that Government which they believe to be the best. No man in theory advocates party Government ; but if an example were wanted to show how the practice of it pans out, it is to be observed by those who heard the last speech ; for the hon. member delivered probably one of the most useful speeches that has been delivered in this Chamber. The manner in which he handled figures has certainly not been eclipsed by anyone. Yet the hon. member was present in this House during the last two years, when all this tremendous financial muddle was going on ; and he does not appear to have

opposed the Government responsible for it. He allowed all this muddling to go on. I feel quite sure that had this House been divided into anything like equal parties—and party government implies something like an equal division of parties—that very great muddle could not have occurred. I wish to refer, in passing, to the compliments which have been paid to those who sit on this (Labour) bench; and I really must ask why it is so. Over and over again several hon. members have declared that every section of the House has agreed especially to thank these people here. What did they take us for? Did they think we were going to do something wrong? I feel in the same position as a man would feel if a friend came along and said to him, "You are a very nice fellow: I feel quite sure you are not going to pick my pocket or strike me." I do not think that man would feel complimented, and I confess candidly we do not relish the very complimentary terms in which various members have spoken, because it seems to us that you must have taken us for very evilly-disposed persons. ("No, no.") The hon. member who has just sat down strongly advised those who were new to Parliamentary life to hurl no mud. If I should do so I would certainly not be following the example of that hon. gentleman, for he spoke well practically of everyone. I wish to explain the position in which we are placed. Some time to-day I did so, but I should like to go a little bit farther. The member for the Murray (Mr. George) in his speech last night, referring to this party, said that we represented not only our constituents, but represented Labour and represented certain organisations; and he went on to say that because we represented a particular interest we should not be counted when the numerical strength of the voters represented by the two sides of the House was spoken of. I do not know why. It is possible for us to agree with Ministers on many questions and at the same time to hold on other questions views with which Ministers may possibly not agree. But if we do claim to be a party, surely it is only fair that we should be placed in the same position as other hon. members. The member for the Murray further proceeded to indicate practically what he had heard from many parts of the country—

that the Labour party do not say definitely whom they will support, but sell their votes to the highest bidder. I think those were the words he used. He asked, how did we know but that the Labour party might support the other side?

MR. W. J. GEORGE (in explanation): I rise to say that I think the hon. member must have misunderstood me. If my words bear any construction such as that I said the Labour party could be bought, it was certainly not my intention that the words should bear that meaning, and I regret it more than my words can express.

A MEMBER: Bought by concessions.

MR. HASTIE: I do not mean that the hon. member had any ulterior meaning, any ulterior view, in the words he used. He meant, bought by superior concessions from the other side. But if the hon. member will think of the position we were all placed in a month or two ago, he surely will not draw that conclusion; for at that particular time, there is no doubt, the last Government would have offered at least as many concessions for our particular support as the gentlemen now in office. We certainly did not consider the question, and very largely we refrained from doing so, because there was one important consideration, even more important than those of the ordinary position in which we stand. There had been a referendum of the people, and that referendum declared it was absolutely necessary for the country to have a change of Government. We recognised that in the same way as, I am glad to say, it has been ultimately recognised by most of the members of the House; and this present Administration was accordingly allowed to have a chance. The main reason that we were desirous of a new Ministry is the absolute necessity for a good many changes in the administration of public affairs. The hon. member who spoke last pointed out a very strong reason why we require to have things looked into. The railways, he said, are the principal asset of this country—he put it very forcibly indeed—and we ought all to remember that as the amount of railway outlay increases, profit from them becomes proportionately smaller. That means, I believe, that the vast majority of the railways we

are now laying are unprofitable, that with every mile of railway we lay we have a smaller income, and that the time is not far distant when we shall be able to get almost no income at all. To my mind it is necessary for us to consider how far we can continue the policy of building new lines. I feel very strongly that at this moment it is undesirable that anything in the shape of railway extension should go on unless we can make perfectly sure that the lines proposed will be payable. I believe I am correct in saying that we have only one paying railway line in this State, and that practically the paying line in question is carrying all the other lines on its back. It will be dangerous to proceed in that direction much farther. We have discussed the Governor's Speech very fully, and I shall touch on it but lightly. I would, however, point out in regard to it—since some people have expressed surprise at our sitting on this side of the House—that we are pledged to work together for at least six specific objects, and that out of those six we find four mentioned in the Governor's Speech; showing that the Government at any rate are intending to go in the direction we ourselves much desire. The first is that of a redistribution of seats, and in connection with this point I should like to say a word on some remarks which fell from the leader of the Opposition, who referred to the ill-feeling that existed between the people on the goldfields and the people on the coast. This he deplored, but he pointed out that it did exist. In another part of his speech he, to my mind, gave us his reasons. He said:

It is probable the Ministerial side of the House represents the majority of votes, but the Opposition side of the House represents the majority of Parliament.

That seemed to satisfy him, and that, to my mind, explains a large amount of the friction which exists between those two parts of the country. I do not remember any occasion when goldfields people have claimed any great superiority, or have put forward any claim to more political power, but I have found at every kind of convention that they urge they must at least have equal power according to their population. No one has told us that the farmer of the country is a much wiser man, or a man much more likely to

lead this country aright, than the miner, except that he happens to own a much larger extent of land. As regards the question of redistribution of seats, until the people on the goldfields and every other part of the country are treated exactly on the same basis as are the people of every other country, there will be friction between the different parts of this State. It has been said on all sides of the House that we shall not be able to pass a redistribution of seats Bill on the basis of population. I do not know of anyone who says we can get an exact population basis, but what I always have contended for is that population ought to be the main point taken into consideration when we re-divide the country. For instance, we had a census not so very long ago, and supposing we said every five thousand people were entitled to have one member of Parliament, it would be absolutely impossible to have anything like equal electoral districts; but we would probably say that no district should have less than four thousand and no district more than five thousand, and if that were the criterion before the House or before the commission appointed to divide the country, very little trouble, in my opinion, would ensue. Everywhere it can conveniently be done it is desirable that you separate interests. For instance, if you can have the farming interest represented in one district, you see the mining industry represented in another, and while there are differences in regard to population and representation you do a very great injustice to those people who have the larger number of voters in their political district. In connection with this redistribution of seats, I should like to make a suggestion to the Government. I submit that the Assembly is incapable of fairly re-allotting the seats for this country. I cannot say exactly what the usual mode is, but I know that, not only in Great Britain, but in several continental countries, Parliament never re-allots seats. A commission is always appointed, for it is assumed, and it ought to be assumed, that members of Parliament are practically interested persons, and it is impossible for them to consider the claims of each district impartially. Is it not possible to have an independent commission of some kind whose duty it will be to re-allot the

seats when the country is again to be divided? We shall all be pleased when the question of the electoral law is brought forward. I am not one of those who declare there is a particularly bad electoral law in this country at the present time. So far as it goes, it is, I think, a particularly good one, but the system of administration has been so wretchedly bad that probably I am the only person in this House who will say a good word for that law. The question of conciliation and arbitration is being introduced by the Government in a manner and with a hurry that I believe we shall all appreciate; and here I would like to say that one result of this strike must be that, so far as we can possibly manage it, no industry in this country will be exempt from compulsory arbitration. I believe both sides of the House are at one on this point, so I trust the Minister will introduce this Bill at the earliest possible moment, and that all members of the House will do their best to facilitate it. I believe the Bill is framed as nearly as possible on the Act in New Zealand. No doubt many of us have theories or beliefs that we could improve in that direction, but in a matter of that kind experience is surely worth a great deal more than theory. Those people have had experience of different revisions in the last five or six years, and the wisest course is to follow their example, and put Western Australia, as far as possible, on the same lines as New Zealand is—a country where strikes are practically impossible. There are one or two other matters. I think the question of a Factories Act was referred to in the Governor's Speech, or at any rate it was alluded to by the Premier in his address at Queen's Hall. I admit that very few of us have practically felt the want of a good factories Act in Western Australia, but in a comparatively short time we shall have an increase of inter-State trade, and if the same facilities for sweating as exist at present are continued, Western Australia will very soon become the sweating den of the whole of Australia. I do not believe there is any man in the House who wishes people to take advantage of this circumstance, and I think it will be found to be the great wish of the people of this country that sweating shall be made as difficult here as it is now, in

my opinion, in Victoria and other places. One or two other questions, such as that of a tax on ground values, have not been mentioned in the Speech, but in connection with another matter I shall refer to that subject in a short time. I was speaking just now largely from the point of view of the people on the goldfields. Most of us have lived in that part of the country for the last few years, and we cannot but emphasise the importance of many questions peculiar to that part. The first question which strikes us, and which we are always emphasising, is complaint of the doctrine of centralisation. That seems to be the governing doctrine of this particular country. We on the eastern fields, just the same as those up Geraldton way and other parts of the country, have been complaining, and continually are complaining, that everything is being centralised in Perth and Fremantle. I do not know if we are worse off in Western Australia than are the people in any other part of Australia as regards centralisation. Take Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, and you find the same tendency there, but you must remember that we have infinitely the largest seaboard, and you must agree that in Western Australia we can only develop the resources of our country well if we take advantage of every port. The hon. gentleman said last night that every port gets all that its geographical position entitles it to, but we on the goldfields have said over and over again that we wish to get to a particular port—that of Esperance. I do not wish to discuss that question at this late hour, except to assure the House that the people on the eastern fields are just as anxious to have that port now as they ever have been, and whenever it is seen that the finances of the country are in a little better condition than at the present time, all their political influence will be used to endeavour to obtain communication with the seaboard there. One thing surprised me to a very large extent yesterday, as an eastern goldfields man. There are in this House probably a dozen people who are connected with the mining population, and besides those people in this House there are many associations, many unions of all sorts, which are continually emphasising any particular want; and so far as I know not one

single association or one union knew the fields were on the eve of bankruptcy, until we heard it yesterday from the member for the South-Western District. We did not know that the timber supply would be run out in about three weeks. We thought there was sufficient timber for about 12 or 20 years, and on behalf of the eastern part of the country I thank the hon. member for the information he gave us.

MR. EWING: It is true.

MR. HASTIE: It may be, but no one ever thought of the question until he mentioned it in the House last night.

MR. EWING: I mentioned it long ago.

MR. HASTIE: With reference to the question of railways, I would simply say it is absolutely necessary to have communication between the different parts of the country. At the present time a railway is going from Menzies out to Leonora. It cannot stop there. It will, I believe, be necessary to go from Leonora to Mt. Malcolm up north. Then, I have indicated the Esperance line, and probably a branch line will be required to go off that one to the north of Menzies, and up in that direction. It will be necessary for us to consider in what way we can best supply communication to different parts of this country. I agree with the hon. member that the financial difficulty is a very important one, and they tell us there is one particular way to do what is required, and one alone, that being to allow private railways. Personally, and so far as those who sit on this bench are concerned, I candidly admit we are strongly opposed to private railways in any shape or form, and we are opposed to them largely for this reason, that we do not know of one single private railway line in the world that has ever been a success. I do not know of any, and if the hon. gentleman can tell us any particular one, then we will inquire into the case. I say that no English private railway is a success, unless it is the subject of competition. If there were no line to the goldfields and we wanted one, and you said to a company "You can construct a direct line from here to Kalgoorlie," that would be right enough if we could guarantee there would be an opposing company to run a parallel line to the same point—then I see no danger; but I do see a danger when one company has

an absolute monopoly in a district. The gentlemen who are advocating private lines are fond of telling us that we can make strict conditions, and they tell us too that they can get people in England to take a line on conditions by which there would be no land grants, but simply to carry coal at a half-penny per ton per mile, and under conditions by which Parliament would limit the amount of the fares, and the freight, and by which this State could take over the line at a valuation in a comparatively short time. One hon. gentleman tells us that, and no doubt that hon. member himself believes it.

MR. EWING: I do.

MR. HASTIE: Well, I do not; I do not believe there are half-a-dozen members of the House, who know anything on the subject, who believe anything of the kind. If you can put a plan before speculators in England that is feasible, you in all probability would get people to take it up, but when you put up a deliberate "wild cat" scheme like this, I say no one will look at it. Australia has had perhaps 20 or 30 cases of private railways, and each of these private railways has been hedged round with certain conditions. The people wishing to float these lines in England will say "there are strict conditions there"; but in no previous case in Australian history have the conditions ever yet been carried out. I never heard of a place where they tried to carry out the conditions except in New Zealand: there the Premier "burned his fingers," and the matter has not been settled yet. To clear up any doubt on this matter, the gentlemen who are so strongly in favour of private railways will have an opportunity to show us exactly what they mean. Reference has been made in the House several times to the position of the Midland Railway, and it has been pointed out every year that if things continue as they are, the Midland Company will ask a bigger price. We, not they, are the masters of the situation. In the first place, it has been pointed out here over and over again that the Midland Company are under a specific contract. Is the member for the South-Western Mining District, and those who support him, ready to support the Premier and the House to see that the utmost rigour

of the contract is carried out? I hope they are: if they are, it is the exception in Australian history. At any rate, it is the best thing to put them to the test. If they can assure the country that strict conditions can be carried out, that will make it possible for the question of private railways to be seriously considered; but I do not think it is possible in connection with the Midland Railway. There is not only a contract but something else to consider, and I wish the Premier and Colonial Treasurer would seriously look into the matter when they are trying once more to "raise the wind." The Midland Company have a very large area of land, and that land is of little use to them or to anyone else, and they believe—and it is perfectly true—that by just simply holding on to the land it becomes of more value, for this reason, that the people of this country are busily working and improving this land. Yet in the face of that, this extraordinary thing appears before us, so far as I know at any rate, Western Australia is the one English-speaking country on the face of the earth where there is no land tax. An increase in the value of the Midland Company's land is continually going on; we protect their land, yet we do not take any share in the increment of that land. Why is it that we do not tax the land of the Midland Railway Company? How is it that we cannot see the increment in the land becomes the property of the State, and not of that particular company? That is a question which is really worth considering, and if it is not, when any proposed purchase of the land and the railway is considered, a great injustice will be done to the vast bulk of the people of the country. There is another question on which we have been doing a lot of grumbling on the goldfields, and it is that public money is invariably spent on or near the coast, and not on the goldfields, and in this connection I wish to mention one particular point. Within the next month we are to have a Royal visit, and to emphasise that visit some people in Perth are spending a huge amount of money in decorating the city, and I believe this is being done mainly at the expense of this country. The member for North Murchison to-day asked a question on this subject, and I think it is a very serious one, because committees

formed in this country hitherto have had the power to spend money, but invariably that money has had to be found by the public Treasurer. I have not the slightest doubt that the people in Perth who are spending the money on decorations at the present moment believe that the Parliament will vote whatever amount they wish. I would suggest that the Parliament of this country should at the earliest possible moment declare the actual amount of money it is probable or possible to give for these celebrations. That alone will limit the expenditure on these absolutely unnecessary grand arches.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: We are trying to fix it now.

MR. HASTIE: How much have you promised—five thousand pounds? If you leave it to me I will cut it down to three thousand pounds. The clock is going much too rapidly. However, I must speak on one or two other matters, and the first is a matter to which attention has been called here for some considerable time, and it is an important matter. There is an Act here already in existence, known as the Local Registration of Companies Act. That Act has already been passed, but it is not enforced. Members not connected with the goldfields or with share dealing may not understand the circumstances. We differ from the people in the East in this respect—in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, and New South Wales—when people make a find on a mining field and wish for assistance, they have always a large number of the resident population to appeal to. Here we have absolutely no resident men to invest in our mines, and why, for the particular reason that it is almost impossible for a man to live in Western Australia and hold Western Australian shares. At the present moment the centre of the Western Australian mining market is London. The man in England gets the first information: he knows everything that is going on; he gets the first opportunities to buy and the first opportunities to sell. These people in London have a habit of arranging things in such a way that it is almost impossible for us to have any resident investors here. The same thing occurred some years ago on the Rand. The Transvaal Government tried to remedy the matter by passing an Act similar to

that recently passed by this House. It meant that there must be at least two resident directors for every local mine, that buying and selling should be done just as freely on the Rand as in London, and the first information on all mining concerns would be given to these people near by, who should have the opportunity always of visiting the mine. Shortly the result of that Act was that in a comparatively short time Johannesburg, not London, became the capital of the Rand mining market. The same thing I believe to a large extent has occurred here. If our Act had been rigorously enforced, as on the Rand, things might have been right: only our Act contains I believe some clauses that require amendment. That is a matter for further consideration. One thing has just occurred to me that in the speeches we have heard here, and the great number of subjects referred to, not one gentleman has mentioned the Coolgardie water scheme. Why is that? No one has the courage to tackle it, and that is my position; I admit it. As to mining matters, the Governor's Speech enacts comparatively few changes, and very few of us would have liked to have seen more. I do not think anyone will willingly press for a great number of changes now in consequence of the circumstances of the Government, and because it is absolutely necessary for every possible administrative ability the Ministry have to be applied in the direction of looking after our finances. No sooner did the Ministry get into office than they abolished the continual surrender of leases, and we know what that means. There are some people in this part of the world who believe that when a man applies for a piece of ground he intends to mine. Or put it this way. Supposing 10 leases are applied for, in almost every case people hope that it means 10 gold mines, but it does not. It would rather be true to say that if 10 leases are applied for, you can be absolutely certain that nine of them are frauds; that is to say, for the greater part of the time the labour conditions under which they are taken are not carried out. That is putting it very mildly. A lease is taken up and is held for some time; occasionally it is thrown up; but it is never thrown up if situated in the immediate neighbourhood of a rising population. So it has happened that

about Kalgoorlie, Boulder, and other places, very many leases have been held for some years, without a pick being put in the ground, in some instances. In every case where the labour conditions have been carried out, it has been only because the holders could not help it. And these people have approached the Government and said, "We will surrender our leases if you will give us the fee simple of two, or three, or four blocks." When I remind the House that these blocks in some cases are worth two and even three thousand pounds, it will be seen that very valuable consideration was given away.

A MEMBER: It should never have been allowed at all.

MR. HASTIE: The hon. member says it never should have been allowed, and I believe every person will agree with him except those persons who got blocks for themselves.

A MEMBER: Put them out again.

MR. HASTIE: The position of the present Minister for Mines is a far more enviable one than that of the last Minister for Mines. The present Minister says he will not consider such applications under any circumstances. The former Minister said he would consider every case, with the result that probably two-thirds of his time was taken up in listening to the stories of applicants. I am sure we are all glad the present Minister for Mines stopped that little game. There is another matter, one of very, very great importance, which has received attention from the present Minister for Mines, although probably the country has heard little about it. It has reference to tenure of ground. You know on the goldfields ground is worked either as block or lease. Now and then the question arises, which is the more suitable title for ground to be held under—as a lease or as a block? Complications of that kind have recently arisen to a great extent at Bulong, where there is an exceedingly good lode, one of the longest chutes of gold I know of on the eastern goldfields. It is for the most part held in claims. A part of that was no sooner taken up by certain people in claims than certain other persons took it up on lease. The former people had a prior right by reason of their prior claim; and the question arose, should that ground, apparently so suitable for claims,

be given in larger areas. That matter caused very considerable trouble to the Minister for Mines, who came to the conclusion that the best way to treat it was by giving the claim men a preference. Moreover the Minister ruled that any mining ground which could be easily worked by people of small capital as claims, should not be leased. But then the difficulty arises, who is to be the judge of that. It is absolutely impossible, I submit, for any man resident in Perth to judge in the matter. The question at Bulong is a small one just now; it does not trouble the country very much as yet; but it will cause trouble in the future. The Minister is not in a position to judge fairly; he has to take *ex parte* evidence to a large extent; he cannot inspect the ground personally; he does not know all the circumstances. The Warden's Court has been a court of keen contention, and a court which in most cases hears only one side. That Court is not capable of treating the matter as fairly as a locally-elected mining authority. That is one reason why I believe that it will be absolutely necessary in the near future to have mining boards established all over the country, to consider these and similar questions. Remember the position. We have a goldfield greater in extent probably than that of any other three countries in the world; and it is absolutely ridiculous to say that one man, be he the best in the world, can ever administer that by himself. The more we develop the field, the more necessary it becomes for us to have the power of local control; and I would like to see such control established at the earliest possible moment. In view of that, and also for other reasons, it will be necessary to consider the subject of miners' rights. At the present moment they cost £1; consequently very few people on the goldfields ever have a miner's right.

A MEMBER: They cost 10s.

MR. HASTIE: Yes; they cost 10s. The principal reason why miners' rights are so scarce is that, except to a man prospecting and likely to get a valuable claim, they are absolutely useless; they confer no right whatever save one. The possession of a miner's right enables you to jump the claim of some other man who does not hold a miner's right. That is

all. I have never heard of anything more. My own idea is that 2s. 6d. would be quite a sufficient fee for a miner's right. However, I feel sure it would be greatly appreciated by a large section of the mining community, if the Minister could see his way to bring it down to 5s. It would be appreciated by a larger section still if the fee could be reduced to 2s. 6d. The same thing should apply to woodcutters' licenses. At the present time the license costs £3 a year; and however much you may justify that in some aspects, you have always to bear in mind that it is only the absolutely poor men on the goldfields who ever go woodcutting. Thus it is from the poorest section of the goldfields community that you demand the biggest fee. I do not see the necessity for that tax; and I wish the authorities would consider the matter and see whether it is not possible for us to allow miners out of employment to earn a living by cutting timber without charging them for the privilege. The question of mining on private property has been mentioned; not as affecting the goldfields, but in regard to the lead and copper fields in the Northampton district. A Mining on Private Property Act is particularly necessary; but I would like to know exactly on what lines it is to be drawn. It is all very well to say, "Tax every copper and every lead mine that is not working." But what is, say, a lead mine? How can you prove it? I dare say the same rule applies to lead mines and copper mines as to gold mines, namely that in most cases the stuff is not payable; and are you going to tax the owner of an unpayable mine? I do not think that practice would be a proper one; though I believe we have the moral right, and ought to have the legal right, to force any man holding portion of the mineral wealth of this country to allow other people to work it if he will not work it himself. Then I would point out one or two other things in connection with leases. The first one is that of exemptions. We can say the same about exemptions as about leases—that most of them are frauds. It is the easiest thing in the world to get exemptions. It is all very well to blame the wardens for it. Wardens cannot help it. They must content themselves with the evidence before them, and in ninety-nine applications out of every hundred only one side

is heard. The applications are always *ex parte*, and it is quite easy for a man to come forward and give the most plausible excuses. The result is that not a quarter, not a fifth, of the ground held under lease on the goldfields is being worked as mining property. If you can stop the exemptions to a large extent, then you will give a very large amount of work. But I would go further. I feel it is absolutely necessary to inquire whether the conditions under which ground is leased in this country are carried out, and further that it is necessary to impose a minimum amount of improvements on holders in respect of ground which has been held on the goldfields for a certain time. Not one of us wishes to act harshly; but what we do all desire is that a small number of people in a locality shall not have the privilege of preventing work being done in that locality. It is absolutely essential, more especially in the large centres of population, that all mining property held under lease should be examined to ascertain whether the labour conditions have been fairly carried out; and where they have not, the ground should be thrown open to those who are willing to work it. I shall refer to a few other matters very briefly. The first one is that of immigration of European aliens. We had a very full discussion on this subject some time ago, in reference to the enforcement of the clauses of the Undesirable Immigrants Act. To my mind the only real objection to the enforcement of that Act brought forward, was the difficulty of getting labour on farms. I believe that difficulty exists; but I do not see a necessary connection between the two things. So far as I can learn, comparatively few European aliens have come out here to work on the farms; and when they have gone on the farms, they have very rarely stayed on them for more than a month or two. So that the objection from that aspect should not cause us to stay our hands. Such questions as the importation of fruit, the invasion of rabbits, and many other very interesting matters, I shall leave for other hon. members to deal with. In conclusion, I will only say this. We have met here as a new party, and we have very serious responsibilities. The previous Government gave us a period of very considerable inflation. In every case I know

of, periods of inflation in Australia have been followed by periods of depression; and it is necessary for us to make that depressed period here as short as ever we can. And we can shorten it in this country much more easily than we could in any other older civilisation. It is all very well to say that in New Zealand, Victoria, New South Wales and other places the people are progressive. If we liked, we could catch up to them in a year. We have none of the troubles which obtain there; we have practically no vested interests; we have no established customs; we have comparatively no old people; so we can make changes easily, without disturbing long-existing conditions. I ask hon. members to consider seriously what we can do during this session in the direction indicated.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): At this late hour I do not propose to detain members with any long address. A few items in the Governor's Speech should have earnest consideration, and in my opinion there are several items which might have been inserted. Much has been said about the Midland Railway, and this is a matter which has become a burning question throughout the State. That company is like a foreign company cutting the State pretty well in two: it has something like 3,000,000 acres of the best land in the coastal district locked up from settlement. Many people come from all parts of the land within the agricultural areas or within the rainfall, and make an examination of the land along the Midland Railway. They apply for some of it, but find their applications are not entertained; and if the Government will do something to release that land and get the railway and concessions into the hands of the public, they will accomplish a great good. It is known that the company's concessions comprise coal in very large quantities, which is needed for the Murchison district. In that district the mining people have to pay from 30s. to £2 a ton for the wood they use in their engines, and that wood has now been nearly all cleared out, so the districts will have to be supplied with coal, or else stop mining operations in those parts. That is one of the principal reasons why we should try to get these concessions away from the Midland Company. Another reason is that the com-

pany have not given satisfaction in regard to the accommodation on the line or the settlement of the country where they have their concessions. I would also recommend that the conditions of their agreement should be carried out in a very stringent manner. A heavy land tax should be imposed on large concessions like that of the Midland Railway and the land held by the Hampton Plains Syndicate. There should be a tax on all large concessions held by foreign companies, and nearly all land taken up in this State should bear a land tax. Blocks of land of more than 500 acres in extent should have a progress land tax placed on them, and if the Midland Railway Company paid a tax of something like a penny an acre on their land, that would yield many thousands a year to the revenue of this country. Instead of that, there is no revenue collected off those lands, and the company are not making use of them. The lands are increasing in value at the expense of the State, owing to works paid for by public money. I would also like to see the land in the coastal districts thrown open for selection. People come to inquire for land, spend a considerable time in examining the country, and go in and make an application to the Lands office, but they find in five or six months that somebody else had a prior right to the land. The application goes in and is referred to the holder of a pastoral lease—that portion of the land being held under pastoral leases to a great extent—and in many cases the holder of the lease puts in a claim. To my knowledge the amount is something like £200, £300, or £400, the consequence being that a person who has made an application has too often had to go and seek some other calling. I would also like to see some mention of a Fencing Act. The present Fencing Act is not what it should be in any part of the Greenough district. If a selector goes out and takes up land, he is compelled to put up an external fence on the boundary of that land for the purpose of keeping out stock belonging to the holder of the pastoral lease. I consider that the owners of these pastoral leases should be made to bear their part of the external fence. I am in favour of the free importation of apples by the removal of those regulations of which we

have heard so much. We have nothing in the Governor's Speech as to what amounts have been spent on drainage in the South-Western district, but I hope we shall hear something on that point in the near future. Those districts enjoying the benefit of this drainage should in my opinion be saddled with the expense incurred. There is also the question of the Agricultural Bank, at whose disposal the Parliament has, I believe, placed a sum of £200,000. It is not clear to the general public in what way this money is being expended, but I know of many cases in the northern districts where applications have been made to the Agricultural Bank for assistance and have been refused for some excuse or other, and I believe that not £500 of this £200,000 has been laid out in nearly all Gingin. In the matter of immigration I would like to see some system of having immigrants nominated by friends who have come to live in this State. That system would work very satisfactorily. The system whereby a man who lives in this State could nominate his family or his relatives, and get the Government to pay the expenses of their coming here from the other States, or wherever they may be, would work fairly satisfactorily. When they arrived here their friends would be prepared to look after them and see them safely provided for. I see the Government intend to make some provision for a Circuit Court, and the time has come when that should be accomplished. That has been promised now year after year for some eight or ten years, and I consider that a circuit court should be held in every large centre in order to save the expense which people would otherwise have to incur in going to law when necessary. I would also like to see some provision made for roads and bridges. These things are required in pastoral and agricultural districts as much as large schemes of harbour works are required in other parts. Mining on private property is another matter which should receive the attention of the Government. I know of a great many mines on private property in the Northern district, but the owners of the property cannot be found. Prospectors go out and find a lode. They come in to the Mines office to take the land up, and find it is block so-and-so,

but the owner cannot be found. These blocks were taken up for mining purposes 30 or 40 years ago, but the owners have paid no attention to them. The mines have remained unworked and the owner has paid no revenue to the country. These blocks are locked up from the public now. I may say in reference to the Government, and what position I may take up and where I intend to sit, that I am prepared to assist the Government in every reasonable and fair measure they may bring forward. The country has been asking for a change for a long time, and that change has now come about; therefore I think it is only reasonable and fair that the Government in power should have a chance of looking into matters and getting into the running in a fair way. I am not a believer in putting the Government out without there is some serious cause, and as long as I consider the Government are going on in the right way, and are bringing forward wise measures, I hope to support them. I shall not vote for the sake of putting them out of power.

On motion by MR. QUINLAN, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.45 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 9th July, 1901.

Member Sworn—Address-in-reply, Presentation—Question: Sewerage for Perth and Fremantle, Finances—Question: Railway Passes, Technical School—Leave of Absence: Debate on Attendances, Divisions (adjourned)—Motion for Papers: Midland Railway, Agreements, etc.—Motion: Railway Employees' Strike, to debate; farther motion, point of order—Supply Bill, £1,250,000; all stages—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

MEMBER SWORN.

The HON. W. G. BROOKMAN (Metropolitan-Suburban), who had not attended previously in this session, took and subscribed the oath, and signed the members' roll.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

At 20 minutes to 5 o'clock the PRESIDENT, accompanied by honourable members, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-reply to the opening Speech of His Excellency; and having returned, the PRESIDENT reported that

His EXCELLENCY had been pleased to reply as follows:—

MR. PRESIDENT AND HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

I thank you for your Address-in-reply to my opening Speech, and for the assurance of your desire to deal with all questions that come before you in such a manner as to promote the advancement and welfare of the State.

QUESTION—SEWERAGE FOR PERTH AND FREMANTLE, FINANCES.

HON. M. L. MOSS asked the Minister for Lands: 1. Whether any portion of the sum of £150,000, appearing in the schedule to "The Loan Act, 1896," for sewerage for Perth and Fremantle, has yet been raised. 2. Has the said amount of £150,000, or any part thereof, been reappropriated by Parliament, and if so, what amount, and by what Act and for what purpose. 3. Has any part of the work for which the said sum was allocated, and if so, what part, been undertaken. 4. Has the Government advanced or granted to the City Council of Perth any amount, and if so, how much towards drainage works. If any amount has been advanced, what are the terms on which the money has been lent. 5. Have any moneys been granted to the City Council of Perth for drainage works out of General Revenue since 1896. If so, what amount. 6. Have any such grants been sanctioned by Parliament. 7. Have any grants or loans been made out of the said loan moneys or from revenue to the Fremantle Municipality for drainage purposes; and if so, what amounts, the dates of the grants, and the authority for the grants or loans.