

Mr. Hackett principally—I may say almost entirely—for the establishment of these gardens. Mr. Hackett has given a great deal of time and attention to the matter, and is most enthusiastic in regard to it. He is deserving not only of the thanks of this House, but of the whole of the colony for the great attention he has given to the matter. I only hope these gardens will prove a source of great pleasure and enjoyment, not only to the people of Perth and Fremantle, but to the whole of the colony. I hope while the gardens will give great pleasure to the people, they will also prove to be no burden to the country, but will be self-supporting. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### INTERPRETATION BILL.

##### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Legislative Council, and insisted upon, considered

##### IN COMMITTEE.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather) moved that the amendments be agreed to.

Put and passed.

Resolutions reported, report adopted, and a message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.47 p.m. until the next day.

## Legislative Assembly,

*Friday, 14th October, 1898.*

Motion: Standing Orders Suspension, to expedite Bills — Metropolitan Waterworks Bill, third reading—Bills of Sale Bill, Recommittal, reported—Annual Estimates further considered in Committee of Supply, pages 41-43, Railways and Tramways, Statement on Railway Working, vote passed, progress reported—Zoological Gardens Bill, in Committee, third reading—Coolgardie Mining Exhibition Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading—Adjournment.

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

#### PRAYERS.

#### MOTION: STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved:—

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

The object, he said, was to expedite business. Of course the House would have full control of the business, and no advantage would be taken of the motion, except with the full consent of the House.

Question put and passed, and the Standing Orders suspended accordingly.

#### METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS BILL.

Read a third time, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILLS OF SALE BILL,

##### RECOMMITTAL.

Mr. WALTER JAMES (in charge of the measure) moved that the Bill be recommitted for amendments.

Put and passed.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 5—Interpretation:

Mr. JAMES moved, as amendments, that in the definition of "contemporane-

ous advance," in line 1, the words, "as well as contemporaneous" be struck out, and "an" inserted in lieu; also, in line 3 of the same paragraph, that the word "as" be struck out and "or" inserted in lieu thereof; also, in the last line of the same paragraph, that after the word "granting" the words "or within three days of the registration there" be inserted.

Put and passed.

Clause 48—Bill of sale to secure less than £30 void:

Mr. JAMES moved, as an amendment, that the following paragraph be added to the clause:—

Every secret bill of sale shall be absolutely void in respect of the personal chattels comprised therein. A secret bill of sale includes every bill of sale by way of security which does not purport to be registered or renewed as the case may be within the time, or extended time, hereinbefore provided, or within fourteen days after the expiration of such time.

Put and passed.

Bill reported with further amendments, and report adopted.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

### IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed at page 41.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT (Commissioner, Hon. F. H. Piesse).

### STATEMENT ON RAILWAY WORKING.

*Vote, Railways and Tramways, £840,571:*

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS said: The usual course which I have hitherto followed with regard to works and railways is, on moving the first item, to give a statement to the Committee setting forth, as briefly as possible, the different points in connection with the departments which I have under my control. This session I shall deal as briefly as possible with the two departments, but owing to the length of the session, and the desire on the part of hon. members to bring the session to a close as early as possible, I do not intend to divide the remarks which I shall make to-night into two portions, the same way as I did last year. I shall follow the course which I adopted the year before, and I shall deal with the railways first and then with the works. I hope the facts which I shall be able to

place before hon. members to-night will assist them in dealing with the Estimates, which no doubt will be dealt with in detail, as these are the two largest spending departments of the State, the Public Works Department being the great spending department of the country and the Railway Department being the great earning department, and also disbursing a large amount of money. It is very necessary for the Committee, as far as possible, to have all the facts in connection with the working of these two departments before it. With regard to railways, it is not my intention to go into details with regard to many of the points which I dealt with last year. It was only on the 14th of December last that I placed before hon. members full particulars in connection with the railways. Since that time the mileage has been increased by only 22 miles of railway being added to the system of the colony up to the end of June this year. Afterwards I shall show that a larger mileage has been added to the railways, but as I am only treating with the financial year, consequently I shall only deal with the mileage in use during the financial year. The 22 miles which were added to the railway system consisted of 12 miles of railway taken over between Kalgoorlie and Kanowna. This line was taken over on the 15th December last, is now in full running order, and has resulted in a very satisfactory return since it was taken over by the Government. It has been a convenience to the colony and has been appreciated very much. The carrying out of the work by the contractors was a feat in railway construction which is perhaps rarely accomplished. The whole of the line was down in the course of 12 days, that is the laying of the rails; there was a great deal of earthwork which was completed before, and I am pleased to say that the railway was most faithfully constructed, and is a very satisfactory addition to our railway system. The Boulder railway, which was also taken in hand before the financial year, is 8½ miles long. It was constructed by the Government departmentally. This line too has served the people in the district of Kalgoorlie, and the mining centre there, both as a passenger line and a goods line; the large number of passengers carried over the line as far as West-

ern Australia is concerned has been unprecedented, and the goods conveyed, in consequence of the line being built to the various mines, has been very considerable. The mine-owners, who suggested that this line be constructed, paid for all the sidings and connections, which I pointed out last year would be insisted upon, and in some instances the cost entailed amounted to £3,500, so that the mine-owners have come forward and have dealt with the question of building their own sidings in a way in which I had hoped last year they would.

MR. LEAKE: Why was this railway continued right down to the lake?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The line was continued for the purpose of conveying ore from the various mines to a battery at the side of the lake, and also for the purpose of bringing water from condensing plants erected near the lake. The distance to the Horseshoe, the furthest point to which it had been constructed, was a mile and three-quarters, and, as traffic would result, the line was carried on to that place. A private company offered to build the portion to the lake, but as this would eventually be a continuation of a line in the direction of Bulong, the Government deemed it preferable to construct the line themselves rather than leave the work to a private company, a step which might afterwards cause difficulty if it were found necessary to carry an extension to Bulong. The line was not extended right to the battery, but to a point where a junction could be made conveniently to carry on the line to Bulong if necessary. The company which had the battery paid for the line from the station, a distance of something like 24 chains, to the battery. These are the extensions which have been carried out during the year, with the exception of the completion of a short portion of line to the Bunbury racecourse; and thus are made up the 22 miles which have been added to the railway system of the colony. In addition, it is shown by the report that we had under construction at the end of the financial year five lines of railways, namely, Cue-Mullewa line, 196½ miles; Collie line, 25 miles; Bridgetown line, 42½ miles; Menzies line, 80 miles; and Greenhills line, 13½ miles. Since the commencement of the new year, the Gov-

ernment have taken over the Mullewa-Cue line, the Collie line, and, subsequently, the Greenhills line, and arrangements are in progress for taking over the Bridgetown section on the first of next month. It will be seen that, with the exception of the Menzies line, the whole of the railways under construction at the end of the financial year have been taken over, and it is hoped that the Menzies line will be completed and running commenced by 1st January, which brings the whole of the railways now under construction into connection with the present system. I would like to deal shortly with the results of the working railways, exclusive of the tramways, of which we have only the one in the north, and which I will deal with separately. During the financial year ending 30th June, 1897, the total capital expenditure on the construction of our railways was £3,754,477, and for the year ending 30th June, 1898, the expenditure was £1,312,784.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Does that include the whole of the expenditure, or is it only loan money?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: These figures include everything, except £63,000, which I shall deal with afterwards. The total capital expenditure in the two years was £5,047,261. The total cost per mile, open in 1897, was £4,999, and in 1898 this had increased to £5,088; and I would like to point out that, although we thus show an increase of £589 per mile, we must take into consideration the fact that the rolling stock has been added to very considerably. During the past four years we have expended on rolling stock no less a sum than £801,538, so that the cost of the rolling stock is equal to £808 per mile. If that be deducted from the £5,088, the cost per mile is reduced to £4,280 per mile, as compared with £4,431 per mile in 1890.

MR. LEAKE: Was this rolling stock necessary?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Certainly; it was quite necessary. Although it has been shown that our railways have cost so little per mile, I want to justify the increase, and, therefore, point out that, by the additions to the rolling stock, the capital cost per mile is increased. It must also be taken into

consideration that when we took over the railways, most of them were of the pioneer type, and we have had to add to them and considerably improve them, at a cost of an additional £800,000. These are the additions and improvements for which a vote was taken about two years and a half ago. It will be seen, therefore, that although we have had our lines built so cheaply in connection with the goldfields and other places, still the additions and improvements, and the increase in the rolling stock, have materially increased the cost per mile. Unless this explanation were given, hon. members might arrive at the conclusion that the increase is not justified, and that we were, perhaps, getting away from our position of being, what we may term, the cheapest railway-building people in Australia, and were approaching the position of Queensland, where the railways cost something over £7,000 per mile. All these additions and improvements to which I have alluded were necessary to enable the railways to be properly worked.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is a large expenditure.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will find that more money will have to be asked for. The railways are a large business, and, later on, it will be found necessary to add still further to the rolling stock and equipment of the lines. The gross revenue for 1897 was £915,483, and for 1898 £1,019,677, showing an increase of £104,194, or only 11.37 per cent. The working expenditure in 1897 was £577,655, and in 1898 £786,318, an increase of £208,663, or 36.12 per cent. I will deal with this point later on, when I discuss the reasons for this increase. The net profit in 1897 was £337,828, and in 1898 it was £233,359, a decrease of £104,469, or 30.92 per cent. The percentage of working expenses to revenue in 1897 was 63.09, and in 1898 it was 77.11, an increase of 14.02. The earnings per average mile open in 1897 were £1,103, and in 1898 £1,047, or a decrease of £56. The working expenses per average mile open in 1897 were £696, and in 1898 £807, an increase of £111. The net return per average mile open in 1897 was £407, and in 1898 it was £240 per mile, a decrease of £167. The

earnings per train mile in 1897 were 85.59, and in 1898 they were 67.72, a decrease of 1s. 6d. The working expenses per train mile in 1897 were 54.64, and in 1898 they were 52.22, a decrease of 2.42. Although we are not showing so large a profit, and the efficiency of the staff has to be maintained, it will be seen that the working expenses per mile show no increase. The percentage of profit to capital, which is one of the most important features of all, in 1897 was 9.04, and 1898 it was 4.62, a decrease of 4.42. The percentage has come down by one-half, but even the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) said he never expected we would be able to keep up the large percentage. Our railways to-day still take the lead as showing the greatest percentage of profit to capital, of all the railways of the Australian colonies.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It will be lower yet.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member has made so many forecasts that we are almost beginning to look on him as one of the wise prophets: but, after all, he may perhaps be disappointed next year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I hope so.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It may be the hon. member's prophecies will not come true; at all events, my efforts will be directed to preventing their verification.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What is the percentage of profit to capital in the last three months?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is much lower; and I will presently show what the Government are doing in this direction. I have given the comparative figures relating to the working of the railways, and I now propose to give some reasons why the earnings have decreased. As the report states, the reduction of rates in July, 1896, principally accounts for the great decrease which took place. It will be remembered that the year before last I only dealt with a half-year's workings, but on this occasion I am dealing with the whole year, which is the first whole year since the assimilation of rates. To June, 1898, the earnings of the Northam-Kalgoorlie line were £273,226, but if the old rates had prevailed, those earnings would have been £505,828, or a difference of £232,602.

The concession is equal to 22.81 of the gross earnings last year; and the assimilation, added to the fact that the traffic did not come up to expectations, resulted in a reduction of the revenue. One great mistake was made at the time of the assimilation. Instead of agreeing to an all-round assimilation, the proper course would have been to arrange for an assimilation of the rates for a great many classes of goods, in reference to which we have since had to impose an increase; and we could have prevented the disarrangement in the rates, which has since caused inconvenience and trouble to the people on the goldfields and throughout the colony. If that had been done at the time, we would not have suffered the subsequent loss, and we would not have had to adopt the course we all wished to avoid, namely, interfering with the rates. The working expenses show an increase. It will be remembered that, when goods were consigned from Fremantle to Boorabbin, and subsequently to Kalgoorlie, the contractors took delivery at Fremantle. The Government had nothing further to do with the goods, the contractors paying for them on delivery. The contractors had their own men to unload and distribute the goods, and they collected the rates. The Government made no losses, the contractors being held responsible, and the latter paid monthly, with the result that the Government were making a very good business during the time the contractors had the railway in hand. The public were suffering the whole of that time; and, no doubt, they clamoured for the Government to take over the line as early as possible. That course we did adopt, and we took the line over, and the new rates, which were the rates of the whole of the colony, were then enjoyed by the goldfields people. The result, of course, was that, immediately we took over the railways, we had to provide a staff there; and that staff had to be paid at the rates we were paying here in Perth, plus the goldfields increase, which meant that we had a very large increase in the rates at which we had to pay our men as soon as they went on to the fields. We then had to distribute the goods, and we had also to put up with heavy losses; for, in consequence of having no sheds, we had to distribute the goods for half a mile along

the line, and they were at the mercy of pilferers. Consequently our losses from theft and from other causes increased very considerably until we were able to deal with goods in a better way. That, of course, took time; and I may say that if hon. members will only follow me, they will see that this was one of the principal reasons why our expenses began to increase. Of course, up to that time the contractors had paid for all these things, and now we have to pay; and not only do we have to pay all this, but we have to pay for water and other charges in connection with this goldfields traffic. Of course it will be said, as I pointed out just now, that we ought to have considered the matter in dealing with the traffic, and that we should have arranged to assimilate the rates upon a portion of the goods only, and that we should not have acted as we did, in making a wholesale assimilation. Then we have to take into consideration the increased train service we had to provide in order to deal with that traffic. And we also have to take into consideration the great number of crossing-stations which it necessitated our putting in. We have had to put in something like 30 of these crossing-places between Northam and Kalgoorlie, to enable the trains to pass upon the single line, with two men in charge of each station, because the traffic proceeds night and day without intermission; in fact, the total number of those stations established was 68, and the number of men which it took to man them, inclusive of the larger stations came to 310, so that you can understand that the great increase which it was necessary to bring about in the staff to deal with this traffic caused a great increase in our working expenses. We also, as I said before, had to grant an increased rate of pay. That meant that a man who went on the goldfields expected higher rates of pay. Those increased rates have continued, with the exception of a slight modification which we have recently brought into force, up to a few months ago. As I pointed out when dealing with the Address-in-Reply, we had to provide for the running of water trains; and if we take into consideration the increased cost this represented it will be found to

be very great. We took 42,000 travelling tanks during the water trouble, containing 55,440,000 gallons, necessitating a train mileage of 228,606, and representing a cost of £49,531. When we come to look into this we shall find there is some justification for the reason of the increase of our working expenses, which, consequently, meant the lessening of our profits.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: On what basis do you arrive at that conclusion?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Upon the train mileage. Now, I think, if we take the summary, it will put the position more clearly before hon. members. It will show that the gross earnings for the year were £1,019,677. The loss of revenue through the reduction in goldfields rates and also through the reduction in timber rates, which came into force in March, 1896, meant a loss of altogether £263,386. Thus if we were to call these losses gross earnings, and add them to our earnings, they would mean we would have earned £283,063. We would have earned it if we had not assimilated these rates, and brought down the timber rates to the level of mineral rates, which shows the reason why we cannot compare this year with those years when our profits were so much larger. The working expenses, too, amounted to £786,318; the extraordinary expenditure in connection with water haulage amounted to £49,531; and extra expenditure in connection with Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie—that is, in regard to the increase in pay of the men—amounted to £24,000. Therefore, if we deduct these items of £49,531 and £24,000 from the £786,318, representing gross working expenses, we have £712,787, which sum represents working expenses at the rate of 55.55 per cent. of the revenue. Taking the £712,787 as ordinary expenditure, that would leave a profit of £570,276 after paying working expenses, or, in other words, it would give a return of 11.28 per cent., thus bringing us up to the point at which we were in 1895-6, when we made such a large percentage upon our capital in the way of interest.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You could not have the revenue if you did not have the expenditure.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: But we are showing the reason why there has been a falling-off in the revenue.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You are showing that you have expended your revenue, and consequently have lost money.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Nothing of the kind. The revenue has provided for the working expenses and interest on capital account, as I said before, 4.62, so that after all it has not been a very bad result. Now, then, regarding increase of traffic, we have heard it said that there has been a falling-off in the traffic. Now these figures will prove to hon. members that what I have already stated is supported by facts, and we might expect, in consequence of this falling-off—that is, the decrease of our earnings—that we should have had a diminution of the number of tons that we have carried, and a falling-off in that way. But I may say that, on the contrary, the increase has been very considerable. If we take our passenger traffic, we find that in 1896-7 the number of passengers conveyed over our railways was 3,607,486; but for 1897-8 we have conveyed 5,669,444.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: So you see that we have conveyed an enormous number of passengers over our lines.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is counting the Boulder traffic?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am taking everything into consideration. Well, what position do we occupy now? We occupy this position: that, taking a comparison with the eastern colonies, we find that in Victoria in 1898, the population being 1,169,000, they had there 43 million train journeys; that is 36.84 per cent. journeys per head of the population. In Western Australia we have a population of 171,021; and, as I pointed out just now, we carried nearly 5½ millions of people, which means that we moved the whole of our population 33 times per head, so I think this is something to be proud of, because, after all, it is an enormous undertaking to move the whole of our population 33 times, and it proves that the population

of this colony is a travelling population, making use of our railways very largely.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Do you think that you could move the Government?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; it is too firmly established. I am only going to deal with one other colony. New South Wales is a colony whose railways are spoken of most highly. There the population was moved 17 times in the course of the year. We may come down to Queensland, which has a narrow-gauge line like our own: there the population is 480,000, and was moved 5.48 times, and in Tasmania, the lowest on the list, 3.37 times; therefore, I think Western Australia has a great record in regard to her passenger traffic. There is another thing, too, that we can prove. Our goods rates and passenger rates compare most favourably—in fact our passenger rates compare favourably with those of the other colonies, and our goods rates are lower than those in any other part of Australia. I proved that in speaking on the Address-in-Reply. With regard to the percentage of the working expenses and gross earnings in comparison with the other colonies, this is a point which, no doubt, shows how railways are being worked. Unfortunately, Western Australia, which had, I may say, a very high place two years ago, has come to the bottom of the list. It is down now to 77.11, as I pointed out before, with New South Wales at the head with 53.84. Now, although we have gone down so much lower than any of the other colonies, still there is this to say, that we have a reason why all this has occurred; and I am certain of this, too, that although our working expenses have gone up so high last year, every effort will be made this year to pull them down. Now I come to a very important point, that is the percentage of net revenue to the capital cost.

MR. KENNY: You do not give the reason for the falling off.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I did. I explained the matter very fully. We now come to the question of the percentage of net revenue to capital cost. We find here that Western Australia heads the list as compared with the other colonies—I am taking the same years, that is 1897-8—and we find that

the figures are as follow:—Western Australia 4.62, with New South Wales next in the list, 3.75; New Zealand next, 3.24; South Australia following with 2.98; Queensland next with 2.86; Victoria, with 2.69; and Tasmania, with 1.15. Therefore we have maintained the premier position, and we will still maintain it; and I hope next year that there will be a very much wider difference between this colony and New South Wales. Every possible effort will be made to bring about this result.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We hope it will, but we know it will not.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is very encouraging, I know. Still, for all that, we will see what can be done. Now there is another thing, I think, to cheer us up: that for all the increased cost of working, we must remember that we are improving the grades on our railways; we have increased the weight of our engines; we have also increased the weight of our rails; and, of course, there is no doubt about it that this is the true economy of railway management—to have our rails as weighty as possible, and our engines as heavy as we can safely put upon those rails. That is increasing the traction force.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What have you done with the Nannine rails?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We have got them safely housed in Fremantle, and will deal with them later on. So I think hon. members will see that we are taking a right course to bring about a reduction in our working expenses. I should like to deal with one or two things which I have not dealt with very fully before: that is, with regard to our safety appliances. Now these points—that is, together with the electric staff—are the matters in which I daresay a great many people have from time to time said that we are perhaps guilty of extravagance. Now I want to point out to hon. members that upon single lines of railway such as we have, and with an increasing traffic as we have, it is absolutely necessary that we should take all possible precautions in arranging for our traffic, thus minimising the risk to the travelling public and lessening risks in every way possible, and also increasing efficiency of working. Now I think that these results,

if attainable, can only be attainable by the introduction of these safety appliances, and that the small amount expended in comparison with our large capital is fully justified. I do not take to myself the whole of the credit for introducing these safety appliances. The first vote in connection with them was passed through the House by my predecessor, and before I came into office; but I may say that, having the thin end of the wedge in, we kept it in; and we have continued to put in these appliances, and up to date have spent something like £50,000 in connection with the placing of interlocking gear and electric appliances, and in the increase in the number of our telephones; thus, I may say, increasing the efficiency of our service, and lessening the risk to the public. The introduction of these safety appliances has, I am told by the General Manager, decreased the accidents and difficulties by 50 per cent., and I think the public will agree with me that it is rarely now we hear of any accident or any delay—that is, upon the busy lines, because these are the lines I allude to. On lines not so busy there is no necessity for these appliances at present. Everyone who will take the time to go and see the working between Perth and Fremantle, and Midland Junction, and on towards Northam, will agree with me that the introduction of these appliances is fully justified.

MR. LEAKE: Are they put in at Pinjarrah?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Only for the signalling. I think hon. members will agree with me that it was a necessity. A few years ago we had not the discs. The accident that occurred at the Northam station, which cost the Government over £1,500, was owing to a point not being reached at the right time, in consequence of there being no disc. It was one of the trains going to the east. A terrible loss of life might have been caused; and, as it was, eight waggons were broken up. If we had had an ordinary disc, that would have been averted. Now we have discs at every place, and interlocking points at every busy station. To show we are not singular in this respect, I would like to quote briefly from different countries now introducing this appliance, and the annual

report relating to the Cape of Good Hope contains the following:—

I think the time has come for giving a fair trial to one or more of the automatic apparatus that have recently been invented.

The annual report of New Zealand, a country which has gone on for some years working most economically with its railways, says:—

The Government has procured the services of Mr. A. H. Johnson, Electrical and Interlocking Signal Engineer, who is now engaged in preparing plans for a uniform system of interlocking for points and signals on the New Zealand railways, and as soon as plans are complete and approved, the work of applying this system in the first place to the existing signal-boxes will proceed. Hitherto these safety appliances have not been provided, and in this respect the New Zealand railways are behind the age. The estimated cost for the year ending the 31st March, 1899, is £5,000, and expenditure in this direction is expected to go on for some years to come.

The Victorian annual report says:—

Various improvements are in progress and under careful consideration in connection with interlocking, signalling, and safe working generally, so that the working of the whole of the lines may be conducted on the latest and most approved methods.

The report of New South Wales, where the system was introduced by the late Mr. Eddy long ago, and resulting in such satisfactory working, and giving such a lesson to all Australia, says:—

Steady progress has been made with the work of interlocking of points and signals.

I cannot too much impress upon the House the necessity for a continuance of this work. It has not cost a great deal of money. As I pointed out just now, the whole of the cost of it, from revenue alone, has amounted to some £53,000, for the interlocking. When we take the percentage, it is only a little over £2,000 a year; and when we consider the accidents we had at Midland Junction and other places, which cost something like £5,000 or £6,000, we may say it has been paid for over and over again. Then we come to the electric staff. That is a mysterious appliance which many people look at with suspicion, and they think, perhaps, it is something not necessary. I would like to point out it is one of the most necessary things, and, if it were not for the electric staff, which we have introduced, and which I may say I am very

glad has now been put in at Midland Junction and the Boulder, we would not be able to carry out the work as satisfactorily as we do. Those who travel by our express trains, especially the Kalgoorlie train, will, I think, agree with me that this train runs to time, but it could not possibly run to time if it were not for the advantage we possess in having the electric staff. This enables us to pass a train through from section to section. No doubt, if a goods train got in the way of a passenger train coming in some other direction, arrangements could be made for that passenger train, which might be an express bound for Perth or Kalgoorlie, to be despatched on its way without much delay. The distance, as I pointed out on explaining the matter before, between section and section is only eight or nine miles, therefore we have as nearly as possible a duplication of the line. Of course, it was the best thing we could do until the line was duplicated, which, of course, must follow in the future, if the business continues. It is a new thing for the colony, and I may say that Western Australia is certainly taking a lead in this respect. Although the other colonies have introduced it, it was only brought into New South Wales two or three years ago. We find all the other colonies are introducing it now, among them being even Cape Colony, whose railways are being arranged upon the most economical system. We find now that all these colonies are beginning to introduce this system. We find, too, that the electric light, which of course has been of such benefit everywhere, is being introduced in other places as well as Western Australia. The installation which we have put in at Fremantle, and also at Perth, has been found of very great advantage, and although the return prepared some time ago, and placed before the House, did not show a very large profit, still this return was asked for at a time when we had only just commenced our working, therefore it was not a fair criterion of the method in which we can work our electric light system; but at the end of the year, a full financial year, I shall be very pleased indeed to place upon the table of the House a return showing the result of our working. There is one other thing that I may explain in that connection.

I refer to the difference between the profits made by private companies and the profits made by the Government. You must remember this, that the people who have the electric light installation up in their houses have to pay for all connections. They have to pay for the lamp, for the connection from the street, and for all upkeep. But in the return we gave recently we proved that we paid for all that. It was shown in the maintenance expenses, and thus reduced the profit. I think the fact that we got a result almost equal to that obtained by private companies is very satisfactory. We decided to give it a trial in lighting our carriages, and orders have been sent to England with a view of obtaining the most approved system, which has given such satisfaction everywhere else, and very shortly we hope to give a trial on some 20 carriages on long-distance lines. I find that we are not singular in this respect. Gas has been adopted in three colonies adjoining us, but I have had inquiries made from the engineers in those colonies, asking them to give us all information regarding the working of those lines, and they may yet find it cheaper, as some of the English companies have done, to take out even the gas, and put in the electric light. The Queensland report says this:—

It has now been decided to adopt a system of electric lighting under which the appliance in each carriage will be complete in itself, the power being obtained from the axles, and steps are now being taken to import the necessary plant. The fittings are expensive, but on the other hand it must be admitted that the present light is altogether unsatisfactory and behind the age, and that considerable expenditure is absolutely necessary for the comfort of the passengers.

We find that Queensland, with the same gauge as ours, is adopting the light. I find, too, that the light is being used in the Cape, and they have a very great length of line there. I hope that by introducing the electric light—because we are bound to adopt some change of system—we are taking the right course, before committing ourselves to very great expenditure, for the expense will only amount to something like £3,000. We will be able to judge of the value of this light as an illuminant of our railway carriages on long distance trains, and I hope also eventually on suburban traffic, and

thus prove which is the best light before attempting to put in the gas. Although, as I pointed out just now, the cost of putting in the light is higher than that of putting in gas, yet the maintenance is much cheaper, because with the gas system either you must have large holders in different parts, or you must put down gasworks in such places as Kalgoorlie, Geraldton or the main station at Perth, which means a great deal of expense; whereas in the case of the electric light we will be able to so fit our carriages that an ordinary mechanic can deal with the light.

A MEMBER: What is the cost?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I cannot give the exact profit, because I do not remember the figures, but the cost is about the same as that in the case of companies. I think anyone who travels as much as members of this House ought to know the discomforts arising from the present wretched lights, which are most exasperating, for no matter what you do you cannot get a good light. I do not wish to weary hon. members, but I desire to read a short extract which will shew we do not move without authority. When the general manager was in England we arranged that we would go into this question fully, and we have in his report a letter written by Mr. Alfred Aslett. As perhaps hon. members have not gone into the matter very closely, I would like to read it. Mr. Aslett says:—

We have had considerable experience in Messrs. Stone and Company's electric lighting of carriages, and I can, without hesitation, strongly recommend this system. At the present time we have 73 coaches running fitted with Stone's Electric Light, and on the whole it has worked remarkably well. I think it well to state that a great improvement has been introduced by having two accumulators instead of one. The light is now much steadier as there is always a reliable amount of storage power to fall back upon when the dynamos are not brought into work, which will now and again happen between short distance stations, and, of course, when the train is at rest. I made further test to ascertain, as far as possible, the additional fuel consumed by the engine with this arrangement, and find that it is so small as to be hardly appreciable. The total cost of electric light, I am satisfied, is fully one-half less than gas will cost you, seeing that the latter has to be conveyed largely in travelling gas holders, unless you go to the great expense of erecting a series of oil gas works at various parts of your line. Of course, compared with

oil lamps, there is extra weight, but the electric light fittings do not weigh more than the apparatus required by oil gas for the same amount of light. In my opinion it would be a fatal mistake to introduce gas in preference to Stone's electric system of lighting.

That is written by Mr. Alfred Aslett, who is the general manager of the Barrow-in-Furness railway. We have waited some time before introducing this system, and now hope and desire that what we introduce will be universal, and will be appreciated. With regard to our traffic department, I know there have been many complaints in respect to our refreshment rooms. That is one of our weak points. I must say they are very unsatisfactory. We have called for tenders again, and are going to give them another trial. We have secured some very good people, and I hope that by the beginning of next month we shall have new tenants installed at the different places, and that the result will be more satisfactory than in the past. There is one thing we must not lose sight of. It is well known in Western Australia, where there are so few people, that there are not enough travelling upon the lines to encourage the caterers to provide for passengers as they should. We often complain, and people abuse our refreshment rooms, but, where there are long intervals between trains, what are caterers to do with their staff during those intervals? They have nothing to keep them going. On the goldfields line we have a more constant traffic, and we hope to improve the different refreshment rooms along that line. The recent arrangement of despatching the goldfields train at 7.30 at night, instead of sending it away in the afternoon, should be appreciated by the people. Passengers can now take their dinner in Perth, and go right through to the next stopping place without having to leave the train, although I have run up against my Northam friends in regard to this. The Northam people think that this is going to ruin them. Therefore I am between two fires, but I have decided to satisfy the greatest number of people, who should be considered. With regard generally to the Loco. Department, I think excellent work has been done during the year. No increase of stock has taken place. The hon. member for Cen-

tral Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) said we had too much stock; but I think he will find that we have not too much stock, and by and by, if I am in office, I shall have to come to the House and ask hon. members to make further provision for stock. I can promise hon. members that I am not going in a haphazard way in ordering stock. I shall not order any until I know what we can do with our present stock; but we must remember that an engine is only capable of doing so much work, and the oftener the engine goes into the hospital, the weaker it gets in its construction; and the consequence is we get less mileage out of that engine. We must not run an engine to death, but we shall see in the future that the locomotives are properly looked after.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I was talking about bad stock.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We have no bad stock. We have as good a stock as there is anywhere else. As to the permanent way, that is in a satisfactory condition; it was never better. Those who travel over the lines must notice the comfort of travelling, and they must know that it is better than it used to be. The roads are better, and the trains run more easily now. This can all be attributed to the great care exercised by the Permanent Way Department. I dealt with the additions and improvements some time ago; and I do not think it is necessary to again go into this matter. Hon. members know what has been done with the money. We have had to expend a large amount in improving our railways. I will give two or three items, which, I consider, should not have been paid for out of additions and improvements, but should have been provided for out of construction. We have spent £170,000 in water conservation on the lines in providing reservoirs, which are our stand-by to-day. The reservoirs contain more water to-day on the goldfields line than they have ever contained before. We have 51 million gallons of water stored; so that, with an ordinary season, we have sufficient water to carry us on to the end of January. We have something like 30 millions of gallons of water in excess of what we had last year at this time. I hope this will be an advantage, and a saving to us.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Are the tanks holding better?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They are holding well. We have another item to take into consideration. That is land resumption, which is a sore point, and which was talked over last night. This has cost us £270,000, and has come out of this vote, so that if hon. members take this into consideration, the whole length of the railways, I think they will agree with me, when we add this £270,000 to the £170,000, they will find these two items have taken £440,000 of the £887,000 available for the work. We have the duplications, the Fremantle yards, where large sheds have had to be erected, and there has been increased accommodation provided at York. Then, again, £25,000 has been spent at Kalgoorlie which should have been provided for in the amount for the construction of the Kalgoorlie line. All these items have had to come out of the vote, and have sapped it away. I found myself with a small balance at the end of the financial year of £41,000. but it is much less to-day. I want to show hon. members that this large amount, which should have satisfied for some time, has had to be absorbed in works, which cost more than they should have cost, and in this unfortunate expenditure in land, which was necessary. If the land had not been secured, we should not have been able to carry out the works we have done. I will conclude my reference to the railways with the estimated revenue for next year. According to the estimates we expect to receive from the railways £1,225,000, which, according to the hon. member for Central Murchison, we are not likely to get. But we have had the hon. member's opinions before.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When was that?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member said we had estimated at too high a figure. I will give hon. members some idea of how we expect to get the revenue. We expect to get from the eastern line £382,634; from the Yilgarn line £436,146; from the South-Western line £122,428; the Great Southern line £56,437; the Northern line £81,914; the Kanowna line £24,000; the Boulder line £5,000; the Menzies line £20,000; the Bridgetown

railway, which is a small line, £5,000. We expect to get an increase of £86,000 in connection with the revision of the rates. Altogether we expect to receive £1,225,000 odd. We must remember that we have another half year yet to run; during which time we shall receive an increase on the revenue which we are getting to-day. Although there have been some remarks about the falling revenue, there is nothing to be anxious about. The revenue is not falling. It appears to be falling as a matter of comparison; but we cannot take month by month. In the last month there were only 26 payments, but for the corresponding month of last year there were 51 payments, which made a difference of £5,600. These monthly comparisons are not to be relied upon in any estimate of revenue. If we take a quarterly comparison, it is much better. As was pointed out by the Premier a few nights ago, we endeavoured to get as much as we possibly could into last year, and therefore the month of July was not a satisfactory month from a revenue point of view, consequently we have not earned as much this quarter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What do you expect from the Greenhills line?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Central Murchison asks me what about the Greenhills line. We have left that line out because we want something to fall back upon.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You do not expect anything from that line?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We hope to get something from it. I shall be very glad indeed to deal with any other question when the items are under consideration, and I certainly hope I shall be able to satisfy hon. members that every effort will be made to keep down expenditure. I think hon. members will find, on a reference to the Estimates, that, although we have taken over so many lines, we are only asking the Committee to provide £840,741. Last year we asked the Committee to provide £866,396, and we expended £852,647, or £13,000 less than the amount asked for. This year we expect to expend £12,000 less than the amount spent last year, and £25,000 less than we asked for last year.

I have had a discussion to-day with the General Manager, and I am glad to say it is about 15 per cent. below that for the quarter. With the most rigid economy we shall be able to further reduce this. I can assure the House of this fact: my great desire this year will be to bring down the expenses. This will be what I may term the first normal year I have had. During the last 2½ years everything has been bounding, and I have had great difficulties to contend with. We have had to keep on an extra staff; no doubt numbers of men could have been dispensed with, but we had to keep them on because we did not know what would happen. We are now getting into a more normal condition of things, and the result, as far as I can see, is going to be satisfactory.

MR. LEAKE: How is it you can manage to work the railways at a cost of £12,000 less this year, notwithstanding the five or six extra lines taken over?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will tell the hon. member one reason. First of all we must remember this with regard to our traffic, for instance, we have got on the Coolgardie line a large traffic, and however that traffic may increase, we shall be able to deal with that traffic with the same staff. I lost a point just now in regard to the tonnage. I would like to say that the tonnage for 1896-7 was 845,225 tons, but last year it was 1,187,225 tons, or an increase of 342,000 tons, which shows we are doing a large business, although it was not so profitable as we were doing in the past year. The business is still increasing, and although we expect the business to increase, we shall not increase the staff. Our men are becoming more experienced, and consequently we can reduce the staff as necessity arises, and we shall have men more competent to deal with the traffic.

MR. LEAKE: You have an increased staff on the other lines.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: On the Albany line we have lessened our working expenses by £21,000, by reducing the train mileage. That is another point. I think reducing the train mileage, as we have done to such a considerable extent, means a great saving on that line. As hon. members know, the passenger traffic has fallen off con-

siderably on this line, and we must do something to lessen the expenditure. I am sorry to show a loss in the revenue last year, but that was owing to the falling off in the passenger traffic. Immediately we found this occur, we reduced the train mileage. This has been done also on the South-Western line, in regard to the Donnybrook-Busselton section, which is not paying, and on which the expenses have been reduced by £900 a month. Everywhere we can we are reducing the train mileage, and that, of course, lessens the working expenses.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You are also relying on spending less on water.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We have the advantage of a much better water supply than we ever had before. We have 51,000,000 gallons stored, which will enable us to go longer than the end of January. But, if we do run out of water as we did last year, we shall have to spend more money on a condensing plant at Kalgoorlie. We propose to put down a condensing plant costing £10,000 or £12,000, by which we will be able to supply 30,000 to 50,000 gallons per day.

MR. MORAN: Have you the water?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We will get the water from Hannan's Lake. The plans are already prepared, and, if we find there is any necessity, this condensing plant will be erected. The contractors for the Menzies line produce condensing water at a cost of 6s. or 7s. per 100 gallon, but the Government, with their improved plant, will be able to turn the water out at a very much cheaper rate. I mentioned just now that we have had two abnormal years. What I now ask hon. members to do is to give the Government an opportunity of showing what they can do during the present year. Should we not be successful, then the House would be justified in passing judgment on us, provided circumstances do not go against us. If we have ordinary conditions, and go on as we are doing now, I hope to show a much better record at the end of the year. Before concluding, I would like to express the satisfaction I feel in regard to the working of the railways generally, by the staff. We have an excellent staff, composed of men, a good many of whom have

been trained in the colony, and who are filling their positions with credit to themselves and satisfaction to the Government. During all the trying time we had last year, the men, for days and days together, were never able to enjoy the comfort of a bed, but were travelling about the lines looking after arrangements for the supply of water, in order to keep the traffic going. Cessation of that traffic meant disaster, because if the system were once stopped, it would be difficult to get it running again. Every effort had to be made to keep the trains going, and the public did not know how near the department was to getting into a difficulty. Many times, I can assure the House, the officers and myself were caused great anxiety on this score, and I would like to express my appreciation of the zealous way in which every man in the department worked during that trying time. Indeed, the thanks of the country are due to those men who spared no time or pains to keep the traffic going in the interest of the country. It was my intention to go straight on with the Works Department estimates, but I have already been speaking for over an hour, and I am afraid I could not do justice to the other branch of my subject in the time left at my disposal. It would therefore, I think, be better for hon. members to deal with the railway vote now, and for me at a later period, if time permits to-night, to give my address on the Works Department. If there be no time to deal with that branch of the subject to-night, it can be done on some other day. It is possible that hon. members may take exception to some public works, because the Works Department seems to be the *bête noir* of the country. I hope that, when I do speak, I shall be able to place before the House such a statement as will enable hon. members to deal favourably with the Estimates and also give some credit to the officers of the department, who have done so much in their endeavour to serve the country. Before sitting down I should like to say that, though exception has been taken to some of the railway expenditure, hon. members should give the Government an opportunity of showing what they can do under normal conditions, and I hope the House will

not be disappointed when I place my statement before them next year.

#### DEBATE ON RAILWAY ESTIMATES.

MR. MORAN: The Commissioner expected the present supply of water for the eastern railway to last to the end of January; and the department had to be thanked for the manner in which the traffic had been dealt with in past times of panic. There was no part of Australia where water difficulties of the same magnitude were met with as on the goldfields railways. This water difficulty had been with us from the beginning, even when it was a matter of keeping roads open for coaches. The Government had left no stone unturned to meet the great demand for water during the dry season on the railway routes, and in these efforts they had always had his co-operation and support. Travelling on these lines, as he did almost every fortnight, he had seen the almost superhuman efforts made by the officers of the department to meet the difficulty. If there was one class of men in the public service deserving of thanks, it was these railway officers, who, in many instances, worked night and day, in order that the public might not be inconvenienced by an absolute stoppage of the traffic. The Commissioner said there were 51 million gallons of water stored at the present time; but, unfortunately for the country, this water was stored in shallow dams, and the evaporation in Western Australia was something enormous, amounting to 7 or 8 feet for the summer. It was almost certain that, if not a drop of stored water was used during the summer, it would all evaporate.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Six feet would evaporate.

MR. MORAN: How much would there be left?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: About six feet.

MR. MORAN: How many of the dams had more than 6 feet of water?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The dams were estimated to contain 19 feet of water.

MR. MORAN: It was gratifying to hear that statement from the Minister, because the conservation of water was scattered over a large area and was only

in comparatively shallow depths. Had dams been sunk 30 or 40 feet, it would have been a great thing; and this was a point the Commissioner might take into consideration, if ever he had to do similar work again. The precaution of providing a condensing plant at Kalgoorlie was to be highly commended, because condensed water was all the goldfields had to fall back upon, in the absence of a comprehensive water scheme; and it was to be regretted that the Government in the past had not used this means of supply more extensively. He did not know what enquiries had been made as to the supply of water from Hannan's Lake, but that supply was getting limited, large quantities being drawn off by mining companies. It was to be hoped further that the Commissioner had made enquiries in regard to the supply of wood, which was scarce on the goldfields, and would no doubt have to be hauled over the railways. It was to be hoped the Government would not leave the preliminary arrangements for the completion of the condensing plant until absolute difficulty arose.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The work was going on now.

MR. MORAN: It was to be hoped that there would be no necessity to use the condensing plant for the supplying of the railways, but that there might be summer showers, ensuring an adequate supply. But to be forewarned was to be forearmed, and the preparations need not be of a very costly character, although they must be extensive and reliable. One most remarkable part of the Commissioner's speech was that in which he referred to the return he expected to get from the Bridgetown railway. That return looked something like 3 per cent. of the whole cost.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That was for 8 months.

MR. MORAN: Suppose another 2 per cent. were put on, would that pay the working expenses?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It would pay the working expenses, but the hon. member should understand the figures were only approximate; this was an early part of the year.

MR. MORAN: The total cost of the line was £160,000, without rolling-stock or anything else. The Commissioner

should not be blamed, because he could not make traffic. If there was any blame, it fell on Parliament generally.

MR. LEAKE: Public money was wasted, that was all.

MR. MORAN: It was very well to be wise after the event. Then on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder line the Commissioner expected a return of £5,000.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It cost about £17,000.

MR. MORAN: Say, £20,000. Yet there was the Bridgetown line, costing £160,000, which was to return £5,000 per annum in gross receipts.

MR. LYALL HALL: It was opening up the country.

MR. MORAN: It must be particularly good, if it only earned £5,000 gross per annum. The Commissioner expected £5,000 yearly from a railway costing £20,000, adding £3,000 to the prime cost for extras, and yet he expected to earn precisely the same sum from a railway like the Bridgetown railway, which had cost £160,000. In one instance the total capital would be returned in four years; in the other it was impossible to say when the line would pay. If it took £5,000 to pay expenses, the Bridgetown line would be a dead loss for all time.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The railway was intended to open up the country.

MR. MORAN: But the country served by the Bridgetown line was already settled. The anomaly he wished to speak of was the character of station buildings and appointments of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder line, which were of the most primitive description.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Economy had been exercised there.

MR. MORAN: Undoubtedly it had. He almost felt inclined to blame the Government when he compared the stations on the Boulder line with those of the Bridgetown railway. The Kalgoorlie-Boulder line was paying more handsomely than any other railway in Australia, and was the worst and most ill-provided on the continent.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was a well-built line.

MR. MORAN: The line was all right, but the carriages were ancient, and, though there was nominally a separate

compartment for ladies, it was invaded by men. Women had to take their chance of getting a seat. In other respects, however, the population of the goldfields felt nothing but gratitude to the Government for the comprehensive efforts made to serve the travelling public. The grievance in connection with the alteration of the freights had been forgotten in the excitement of a fresh agitation which had sprung up. The Premier could not surely be aware of the great inconveniences to which the travelling public on the Boulder line were subjected.

THE PREMIER said that he had tried to travel on the line, but without success.

MR. MORAN: And the right hon. gentleman nearly ran over the people. Though all were fond of carping at the Commissioner of Railways, it must be remembered that he was doing the work of two men, and that neither he nor his officers spared themselves in working the greatest railway system, as regards mileage, in Australia, and in a colony having the smallest population. The Minister and his officers were deserving of sympathy and support.

MR. LEAKE: The Commissioner evidently found himself in a difficulty, seeing that he appealed to the House for an opportunity of putting himself right, and had admitted that he was in a muddle owing to the faulty administration of last year. The Minister had, however, already had three or four years in which to learn his business, and the Committee had a right to expect something better from him, particularly after the warnings given him last year, not only in the way of direct criticism, but from the actual facts existing at that time. Last session, the Minister maintained that the predictions of his critics were groundless, and that his own views were correct; that his estimates would be reached, and that everything would go smoothly. What was the result?—a decrease of over £168,000 on 30th June, 1898. Apparently the Commissioner would have to be given a fresh lease of office for twelve months, for, although his administration had been so faulty, the Opposition were not sufficiently numerous to ask him to send in his resignation. If, however, there was no marked improvement next year, it was to be hoped the House would

give someone else a trial. He (Mr. Leake) hoped the Commissioner would realise that it was time for him to draw in his horns—that his gilt-edged policy must be abandoned. It was interesting to note the Commissioner's statement that he hoped to work the railway system next year for £12,000 less than last year, notwithstanding the fact that he was taking over five additional and expensive lines. The chief reason given for estimating that reduction was because it was proposed to reduce the train mileage, if it had not been already reduced. If that were done, it would necessarily reduce working expenses; but what about the convenience of the travelling public? They must suffer. That was economy, but sometimes there was such a thing as false economy. Of course the public would not travel as frequently as at other times, if the conveniences for moving about were taken away, and that was one of the chief reasons for the falling off. We were not told whether there was a falling off or not on the goldfields line. There was, he thought, no reduction of the train mileage there, and very properly so; the greater facilities given the people for getting to and from the fields, the better; but that was hardly an excuse, or even a justification. The proportion of working expenses to earnings was, he thought, something like 77 per cent.; that was up to the 30th June. But we wanted to know the difference between the position of to-day and that of 30th June. What was the indication given to us by the experience of the last quarter?

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The remarks made by him (the Commissioner) proved that the expenses had gone down.

**MR. LEAKE:** Had they not gone up to 88 per cent.?

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** No; they were down to 73.

**MR. LEAKE:** In this debate he was not referring particularly to the railway budget, but in considering the Estimates generally we should know exactly the financial position up to date. For some reason or other, however, the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues had not favoured the public with the last quarter's returns.

**THE PREMIER:** They could not be got up to date.

**MR. LEAKE:** Perhaps the right hon. gentleman himself did not have them.

**THE PREMIER** said he did not have them.

**MR. LEAKE:** If the right hon. gentleman had them he knew they were so bad that he would not give them to Parliament, and naturally he would hurry on the closing of the doors of this House so that he would be free from criticism when circumstances forced him to take the public into his confidence. We ought, he (Mr. Leake) repeated, to have them now. We were having economy preached at us, and we wanted to know on what basis we were going to establish that economy, or introduce it. He appealed to members interested in the matter to insist upon having them before the prorogation. We were entitled to know whether our prospects were brighter or more gloomy than we had reason to suppose on the 30th June. Members on the Opposition side of the House would help to unravel the finances.

**THE PREMIER:** A nice lot of fellows they were. They were thorough financiers.

**MR. LEAKE:** Members of the Opposition would get financial affairs out of the tangle they were in, but they could not do so unless they had a proper basis to go upon. They were most anxious to assist the right hon. gentleman.

**THE PREMIER:** The Government were always well abused.

**MR. LEAKE:** The country was never abused by him, and his interests were as much wrapped up in it as were those of the right hon. gentleman; but he was never afraid to confess the truth, and he did not want to find himself face to face with fictitious prosperity. He preferred actual fact, and if we had difficulties the sooner we met them face to face the better, because it would put us all on our mettle. If the right hon. gentleman would tell the House which of his colleagues it was who, during his absence, got the country into such a muddle, Opposition members would censure him if the Premier himself did not like to do so; but let us have the facts and know exactly where we stood. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) referred to the Boulder railway, and the Commissioner of Railways plumed himself upon the fact that it was a particularly paying line, for-

getting to mention, however, that, of the eight miles or so of that railway, half of it need not have been built. There was no necessity to take that railway down to the lake.

MR. MORAN: Condensed water was wanted.

MR. LEAKE: The loyalty of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) in coming to the assistance of the Commissioner of Railways, who made a mistake, was recognised by him (Mr. Leake). Members understood the Commissioner to say that taking the railway down to the lake was justified by the necessity for carrying condensed water from the lake, and for carrying ore to a particular battery. If members knew the locality at all, they would know that the railway ran right through a locality which was covered with batteries, and the mines which produced the ore had their own batteries, so there was no necessity for this special line to carry ore to this particular battery, which was, he believed, owned by a private company. He was told on what he believed was good authority that there was very little traffic on the railway to the lake; that the whole of the traffic was from Kalgoorlie to the Boulder and to the mines in that locality.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) spoke of half the distance, but it was only a mile-and-a-quarter, whereas the whole length of the line was eight and a half miles.

MR. LEAKE: Was it five miles to the Boulder Mine?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes; five miles to the Horseshoe.

MR. MORAN: There was a big loop.

MR. LEAKE: £3,000 or £4,000 could have been saved. When he was up there he could not find out why the line was extended down to the lake.

THE PREMIER: It went to a battery where there was crushing.

MR. LEAKE: Whom did it belong to?

THE PREMIER said he did not know and did not care.

MR. LEAKE: Then we were told that the cost of the construction of railways had been increased during the last few months, and that notwithstanding the increased rolling stock they had only sufficient now for their purpose. That would

look really as if the railways had been starved before. It was not to be wondered at that the increase of cost of part of the line had been so great, when we considered the enormous expenditure which had been made at these side stations. Take, for instance, the station at East Perth, and the stations between Perth and Fremantle; also stations along the Eastern railway line and along the Bridgetown railway. He believed they were works of art.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It would be a great pleasure to him if members would all go down and see them. They would be quite as astonished as he was. There was nothing in them.

MR. LEAKE: It was, he supposed, usual for the department to use French polish when oil would have served the purpose. However, we were face to face with the fact that the Bridgetown line was only going to produce about £8,000 a year, on an expenditure of £160,000. That was a serious matter to contemplate. We were not told what they expected to get from the Collie line nor from the Greenhills line. We were landed with these railways, which it was predicted from the first would never pay, and they were not going to pay. The hon. gentleman did not pretend that they were going to pay, and of course we must all sympathise with the country. Perhaps after all the best thing the Commissioner could do would be to ask for another twelve months, and consider his position. He (Mr. Leake) sincerely trusted that if, during the next twelve months, matters did not improve the Estimates would not be passed quite so easily and quickly as at present. There was a tremendous lot in relation to this railway policy that we did not know about, and the difficulty was to get to the bottom of many of these things. Unfortunately members on the Opposition side of the House were not at liberty to question the Government officials, and if they were they would not get the information they needed. If we could only set a few of these gentlemen against one another, there would, he thought, be some very startling discoveries. He would like to get at the bottom of a great many of the rumours afloat with regard to the administration of the Works Department and the Railways Department. In his

opinion the Works Department was more at fault than the Railways Department. Naturally up to last year we did not hear very severe criticisms of the railways, because they were paying, and paying well, and it was not of much use to raise objections.

**THE PREMIER :** The railways were paying now, too, he was very glad to say.

**MR. LEAKE :** They were not paying expenses.

**THE PREMIER :** Oh, oh! tut, tut. The hon. member did not know anything about it.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS :** 7.3 per cent. last quarter.

**THE PREMIER :** The member for Albany made a mistake that time.

**MR. LEAKE :** A mistake was made by him. The right hon gentleman put him off. He (Mr. Leake) was not feeling very well to-night, or he would have been able to meet the interjection better. What he said was that we were not making so much money out of the railways. It behoved the Commissioner to take advantage of the extra term we were giving him of twelve months, and to come to the House with figures which would show he had not been mistaken in his estimate. But the predictions which had been uttered by members on this side of the House would only be too closely realised, and we should find ourselves next year in a worse position than we were now. It was to the Railway Department the Treasurer looked to maintain his revenue, and prevent a further deficit. The Treasurer expected a greater gross return and a greater net return from the railways than he had last year. His (Mr. Leake's) fear was that the anticipations would not be reached. There were these extra lines to work, and we knew perfectly well that the majority of them were not paying. Most of the new lines would not pay the working expenses and the interest as well. He appealed to the Premier again to give hon. members the quarterly returns within the next two or three days.

**MR. HOLMES** congratulated the Commissioner of Railways on what he proposed to do during the coming year, although not also prepared to congratulate him upon what he had done in the past. The Commissioner of Railways had promised a reduction in the expenses

in every possible way, and it was to be hoped that he would be able to make both ends meet. One hoped the anticipations of the Commissioner would be realised. Looking carefully through the Estimates there were many items that would require explanation. We were told that rolling stock to the amount of £800,000 odd had been imported and put on to the railway lines during the last year; and this had a tendency to increase the cost per mile. We knew there had been lavish expenditure all along the line, which the Committee did not anticipate when the votes were before us last year. We had no necessity to go further than the Perth station to see the extravagant expenditure which had been going on. Some of the work was no doubt necessary, but it was apparent to the ordinary individual that there was reckless expenditure going on which might have been left over for a considerable time. A passenger from Fremantle to Perth was landed sometimes in one place and sometimes in another, at considerable inconvenience, and ultimately he had to squeeze through iron bars to get out of the railway station. That was a small matter which might be improved. We were told, also, that when the railways were in course of construction and the Government had to look to the contractor for the freight, and when the contractor took the risk of delivery, the Government could make the railways pay. But, when the Government took the responsibility of delivery, things got into a hopeless mess.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS :** The contractor got four times as much as the Government did.

**MR. HOLMES :** The contractor seemed to have been able to avoid the difficulties and make the line pay. The Commissioner of Railways had told the Committee that the contractor for the Menzies line had been condensing water, and getting over the water difficulty in that way. Why did not the Government condense water years ago? Officers were paid high salaries to conduct the railways on business lines, and the officers should not have to look to a contractor to gain their experience.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS :** The contractor had only two engines.

MR. HOLMES: The Government with a larger number of engines could do better. In cutting down the expenditure it was the rank and file who had suffered.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We had not reduced a man.

MR. HOLMES: The salaries under the heading "provisional and temporary" had been decreased for this year by £25,000.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The staff had been decreased. No individual man had been reduced.

MR. HOLMES: If the Government had reduced the staff, it was evident the Government were now going to conduct the railways properly, or that they had conducted them recklessly in the past. A considerable number of men had been knocked out of the rank and file and the salaries of the high officers increased. Take the first item, Salaries fixed, £1,300 last year. The amount for this year was £1,900. General Manager's staff, £1,450 last year; £1,850 this year. Chief Accountant's staff, £9,400 last year; £10,500 this year. Traffic Manager's staff, £41,800 last year; £71,000 this year.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: From which columns was the hon. member making a comparison?

MR. HOLMES said he was comparing last year's expenditure with the expenditure proposed for this year.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member was all wrong.

MR. HOLMES: Then the Estimates were wrong. There was the Locomotive Engineer's staff, £17,700 last year; £20,000 this year. Chief Engineer of Existing Lines' staff, £12,900 last year; £14,900 this year. Electrical Engineer's staff, £2,050 last year; £2,650 this year. Interlocking Engineer's staff £600 last year; £1,250 this year. When we looked at the salaries under the head of Provisional and Temporary there was the reverse order of things. The amount last year was £490,000; this year it was £464,981; a decrease of £25,000. There was evidently something wrong there. If the rank and file in the department had been too large, the department was to blame. This ought not to have been allowed to go on. If it was possible to decrease the expenditure in the lower

grades, might it not have been possible to keep the higher grades at the same salaries as they were before? Take, for instance, the Locomotive Superintendent's Department. The Locomotive Engineer, Mr. Campbell, was a very capable officer; a man who had done good work during the last 18 months or two years, and he had been assisted by two foremen who received about £250 each. The cost of the three officers was £1,300. We were told to-night that there was practically little to do in the matter of repairs at the Fremantle workshops, and to show that this was correct, men were only working five days a week instead of six. Yet, there was an additional superintendent employed at £500 a year, and two works managers at £400 a year each to supervise the repairs at Fremantle.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They were employed last year.

MR. HOLMES: The construction of the rolling stock was carried out by three officers at £1,300, but the supervision of repairs cost double that amount. If the officers at the Fremantle workshops had been capable of carrying out the work in the busy times, then their services should have been recognised, and not three officers at a higher salary put on to supervise the repairs. All these items required explanation. It was somewhat amusing to listen to the speech of the Commissioner of Railways. It consisted of a number of "ifs." If he had not reduced freights, or if more people had travelled, or if traffic had not fallen off, things would have been different. Perhaps they would. We knew all about the little dog who, if he had not stopped to get a drink of water, would have caught the hare. That was something similar to the speech of the Commissioner of Railways. The Commissioner of Railways had applied the pruning knife, but only in one direction—amongst the rank and file. If the Minister gave his assurance that the higher-grade officers would be dealt with in a similar manner, that would be satisfactory.

MR. KENNY: It was a simple matter for hon. members to criticise the officers of the department, but the very simplicity should make one careful of entering

on that criticism. Many of the statements of the Commissioner were both interesting and acceptable, while, on the other hand, matters remained which still required explanation. It was difficult to say whether the matter of stores came under the head of works or railways, or under both ; but this item appeared in the balance-sheet of the colony as representing a very large amount. Year after year a statement of the colony's affairs was laid on the table, and every year this item was taken exception to by a majority of members, or at least, by those conversant with the ordinary principles of commercial life. Just as often as this statement was laid on the table, and exception was taken to the item of stores, the Government promised to amend the statement, and present it in a more acceptable or probably more understandable form. Knowing that the time was approaching for the annual statement by the Commissioner of Railways, he (Mr. Kenny) some time ago asked a series of questions, in order, if possible, to get a little light thrown on the subject of these stores. The questions were asked also as a mild reminder that the time was approaching when the House would probably expect the promise which had been made to be fulfilled. It had even been maintained by the Colonial Treasurer and by the Commissioner of Railways, that the stores should be treated as cash. The argument of the Colonial Treasurer was that he had paid for the stores, which stood to the credit of his account, and the argument of the Commissioner of Railways was that he owned the stores, and that they were of the full value of the amount placed against them. It was with a view to verifying those statements and arguments, that the series of questions was asked, and the replies given, while they might be satisfactory to the Colonial Treasurer and the Commissioner of Railways and their colleagues, were not satisfactory to him (Mr. Kenny), nor, he thought, to any member of the Assembly who had the slightest idea of the way in which stock-taking was conducted in commercial life. From the replies given to these questions it appeared that the last occasion on which stock was taken in detail was in 1890, stocktaking being postponed, pending the proper storing and classifying of

the stock ; that the value of the stores at the date of stocktaking was £19,712 10s. 5d., taken at laid down cost ; that it was not known how long the greater bulk of the stock had been in hand ; that no percentage was allowed for depreciation ; and that the stocktaking was carried out, as in mercantile departments, each article, with its value, being duly listed on stock sheets. He (Mr. Kenny) had been engaged in commercial pursuits for years, and in that time it had often fallen to his lot to appear before his banker, when he required an overdraft, or probably when his overdraft was increasing, and his banker desired to know the position of his stock and his affairs generally. The Premier held the position of banker to this colony ; and could the right hon. gentleman for a moment ask the House to believe that the stores dealt with in the stock sheets could be possibly considered good value for the amount charged against them ? It would be utterly impossible to have such a quantity of stock held for so long a time without depreciation taking place, if only from the careless and reckless manner in which material was thrown about at Fremantle railway station. Stock did not improve with keeping, and when it was thrown out and exposed to all weathers and climatic influences, it must depreciate. But what surprised him (Mr. Kenny), and what he had always taken exception to, was that the Government would not pay the slightest attention to the expressed wishes of the people of the colony as shown in the press. Day after day, we read in the morning papers, quoting the best authorities, of the condition of the stores at Fremantle, and of the general conduct of the Railway Department, and yet the Government made not the slightest attempt to alter present conditions. The Government, no doubt, felt they were perfectly safe, and could well afford to crack their fingers at public opinion.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member was wrong there.

MR. KENNY : Public men could only be judged by their public actions, and any student of the actions of the present Ministry could come to no other conclusion than that they cared but little for public opinion, expressed by the people, or through the press. Another question, on

which there was great division of public opinion, was as to whether it was better for the Railway Department to carry out works departmentally or let them by contract.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Had that matter not better be left until the Public Works Department vote came on?

**MR. KENNY:** The Committee were now dealing with railways, and the Commissioner had missed a splendid opportunity that night of informing hon. members as to the relative cost of the line to the Boulder constructed departmentally, and the line to Kanowna constructed by contract.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The hon. member would, perhaps, be surprised if the line under contract was not constructed for less money.

**MR. KENNY:** The statement would not surprise him, but it was to be regretted that the Commissioner had not seized the opportunity of jaying the information before the Committee. The Commissioner was to be commended for, at least, consenting to take a lesson from other colonies in the matter of railway management.

**MR. MORGANS:** The Victorian railways?

**MR. KENNY:** Yes; in some particulars. And the Commissioner had informed the Committee that he intended to pay more attention to the "lights." It would be well if the Commissioner, at the same time, paid a little attention to the livers of the public, because the way in which railway refreshment rooms were conducted in this colony was nothing but a delusion and a snare.

**A MEMBER:** The Victorian railways were bad in this respect.

**MR. KENNY:** In the course of four months he travelled on almost every line in Victoria, and far away in the mallee country, and other back blocks, he never met anything that could compare with the wretched refreshment accommodation afforded to the travelling public in Western Australia. At Pinjarrah, for instance, the traveller was provided with a succulent sandwich which one could well imagine was manufactured of cork soles, lined with gun-wadding, for which a shilling was charged. Not long ago, he was travelling on the Eastern line, and in company with

the Commissioner of Railways and other members of Parliament he went to a refreshment room for a cup of tea and a small scone. Although the price was distinctly marked up as sixpence the party were told that the charge was a shilling and the Commissioner did not seem to take notice whether the party paid a shilling or two and sixpence. The treatment of travellers in this colony, in the way of refreshments, contrasted very badly with the treatment received on the lines in Victoria; and he congratulated the Minister on his determination to follow the Victorian system in some particulars. With regard to the Cue-Geraldton line, it was regrettable that the member for the district was not present to say something of the bad accommodation provided. There had never been a sleeping-car on that line, except for the accommodation of Ministers.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Did the people want to sleep in the day time? The trains only travelled during the day.

**MR. KENNY:** When did the Government intend to construct the Cue-Nannine line? The Commissioner had stated that the rails were carefully stowed in Fremantle, but he (Mr. Kenny), while accepting that statement, could not help thinking there was much uncertainty in the identification of the rails supposed to be stored. The Commissioner spoke of applying the pruning knife to his staff, but he might have removed a few of the highly-paid officials, instead of making a wholesale slaughter of the too-small-salaried men. While there were men in the department earning twice the amounts of their salaries, there were others drawing hundreds of pounds a year who were not worth one-fourth of the amounts paid them. There was also a great contrast between the care taken of their railway servants by the Governments of the other colonies, and the state of affairs here. He would suggest the advisability of insuring the workmen against accident, instead of giving the relatives of a man killed while on duty the magnificent solatium of one month's salary.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** A scheme for that purpose was now in train.

**MR. KENNY:** What a pity it was not in train three years ago, so that the

relatives of the men whose lives had been sacrificed during that period might have been provided for. A workman's life could be insured for £100 for 11s. per annum, or 2½d. a week.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Only one life had been lost in the last 12 or 15 months. In the other colonies the men had to pay their own insurance premiums, as they would have to do here.

**MR. KENNY:** Would it not be a nobler and better policy to spend the sum of 2½d. a week on each man for this purpose?

**THE PREMIER:** Why did not the men pay this small premium themselves?

**MR. KENNY:** If he replied to the hon. gentleman the Chairman might rule the reply was out of order; he must therefore be excused from replying. He was not actuated by any feeling of hostility or hyper-criticism.

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member spoke to the gallery.

**MR. KENNY:** If he ever made such a bold attempt to play to the gallery as the Premier invariably did, he would vacate his seat in the House. The fairness and honesty of criticism of the Opposition members on the Government policy would not shield members from the sarcasms of the Treasury benches, but he could assure Ministers that such displays of wit would never prevent him from doing his duty to the public.

[Debate on items in Railways and Tramways Vote proceeded with, after the general debate.]

Item, Solicitor, £500:

**MR. LEAKE** asked for explanation of the item.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Owing to the great increase of legal work in the department, and the delay in having it done by the Crown Law Department, the appointment of a solicitor to the railways had become necessary. There was a similar officer in every railway system in the eastern colonies, the cost of the office in New South Wales being £14,000, though the income of that colony was about two-and-a-third times the amount of ours. The appointment would mean a great saving to the country, and would assist the department materially in settling various claims. The officer could have been

attached to the Crown Law Department, but he (the Commissioner) had taken the more open course of providing for his salary on the Estimates, so as to permit of discussion. The appointment had not yet been made, though a temporary solicitor was acting, who would doubtless receive the permanent appointment if his services proved satisfactory.

**MR. KINGSMILL:** Could the Commissioner, from his experience of the last two or three years, quote any figures to show that a saving would be effected by this appointment?

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The difficulties arising from delays in the settlement of claims had caused the department to expend large sums of money. Claims had been settled for £100 which, if taken in hand promptly, might have been liquidated for £50. The temporary solicitor had been in office for 117 days, during which time he had given 230 opinions on various matters, had held 300 conferences with different officers of the department, had settled 45 contracts, had revised the conditions of ticket issue and suggested amendments therein, had revised the rules and regulations for the coaching conditions and those with regard to the working of the staff, and had drafted a new Railway Bill, which had been passed by Mr. Sayer, of the Crown Law Department, with but little revision. Of claims made upon the department, aggregating £6,957, there had been settled by repudiation and otherwise, a gross amount of £5,726. Sums amounting to £183 had been paid. He thought the appointment a necessary one, and it would save hundreds of pounds in a year. The great thing was to dispose of claims quickly.

**MR. KENNY:** Would the gentleman appointed be allowed to engage in private practice?

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** No.

**MR. MORGANS:** The item was most reasonable and practical. Every great railway company in England had its own solicitor.

**MR. LEAKE:** There was no motion to strike the item out.

**MR. MORGANS:** The Commissioner was to be congratulated upon the ap-

pointment of this gentleman, who was a very able man.

**MR. LYALL HALL:** The appointment was a new departure in the history of colonial railways, and in his opinion it was totally unnecessary. Of course it was necessary for an English railway company to have a solicitor; but English companies were not like the Government here, which could fall back on the Crown Law Department. The Crown Law Department was, he took it, the proper department to attend to the business of the Government. He took still greater objection to the appointment of a gentleman who had just arrived in the colony from England. Just because he was a friend of some highly paid official he was pitchforked into this position. There was no thought of offering the appointment to local men, who were far more fitted to fill the position. This barrister had only been a few days in the colony, and he could not appear in court.

**MR. A. FORREST:** He would do so after six months.

**MR. LYALL HALL:** It was providing a man with a billet to fill up the six months. Our own young men ought to have the first show. He protested against finding billets for all English "Johnnies" who came to the colony. He moved that the item be struck out.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The amendment would not be seriously considered by the Committee. The member for Perth was unfair as to the gentleman being a friend of a high official. He was nothing of the kind. He seemed to have a thorough knowledge of the work the Government required, and was given an opportunity of showing what he was made of. If he went out at the end of the time, the Government would have to fall back on some of the promising young men spoken of, and he would be only too pleased if we had young men who could take the work up; but the work required a person with a certain amount of experience, and a gentleman with such a reputation as the one who had been appointed might help the Government with regard to the regulations.

Amendment put and negatived, and the item passed.

Item, General Manager, £1,250:

**MR. A. FORREST:** In regard to the General Manager's staff, he noticed that one chief clerk, nine clerks, and a messenger were mentioned. Only the total sum was given. That was not the practice last year. He wished to know if there were any increases in the department which would not bear the light.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** There were 11 persons this year and 10 last. The amount asked for last year was £1,680, and the amount expended £1,446. The Government were now asking for £1,845, which would be the salary of one other officer in addition to the 10 employed last year. There was no increase whatever of any salary except increases under the regulations to stationmasters, porters, guards, or any of those people.

**MR. A. FORREST:** It would be better if the salaries of the staff were put before the Committee.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** By the method adopted the department saved the employment of about eight clerks. At any time, if members liked to ask what the salary of any individual was, they could obtain the information. There was no possibility of any salary being given higher than that which was provided for.

Item passed.

Item, Stores Manager, £300:

**MR. HOLMES:** The stores manager's staff had been dispensed with, but the stores manager was retained. If his (Mr. Holmes's) information was correct there was no store to manage, but £300 had been provided as the salary of the stores manager.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Last year there was a distinct Stores Department, but that had been done away with. In the "Salaries Provisional and Temporary" there was provision for temporary clerical assistance and wages of packers. These officers would do the work of this department. If it was found that a stores manager need not be appointed, such an officer would not be appointed. Every economy would be practised.

Item passed.

Item, Outdoor Running Superintendent, £500:

**MR. HOLMES:** Under the Locomotive Engineer's staff provision was made for an Outdoor Running Superintendent, £500. This amount did not seem to have been expended last year, but recently, at Fremantle, a gentleman with knee breeches and English costume had turned up, and it was said he was receiving £500 a year. Was this another English "Johnnie" who had cropped up at the right time?

**MR. SOLOMON:** This was the person he had referred to in some questions put to the Commissioner of Railways to-day. Perhaps the Minister could give the information he required now. This outdoor superintendent was evidently a new official, and he (Mr. Solomon) was given to understand that some young man was imported from England to fill the position. His name was Mayne, and he had given a great deal of dissatisfaction. There was a large staff of locomotive men in the service of the country, and who had been in the service of the country for years, and surely out of the large staff an officer could be found to fill this position without going to England for an officer.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** It was all very well to say that an officer could be found in the department to fill the position. If there had been a man in the department fit for the work there was an officer at the head of affairs who could recognise merit. It was necessary to have a man as Outdoor Running Superintendent who was able to get about, as it was found that the head of the department had too much to do, which kept him in his office. There was a great deal of detail work to be done, and the head of the department required relief. The question arose as to whether there was a man fit for the position in the department, and it was decided that there was not. This was really a matter of administration, and should be left to the Minister to decide. If members were going to cavil at the appointment of a man to fill a responsible position of this kind, then good-bye to effective reforms in the department. This Outdoor Running Superintendent was selected out of 30 applicants in response to an advertisement which was inserted in the news-

papers at home. Mr. Davies was at home at the time, and he saw the applicants, and selected the officer. This man should be given an opportunity to show what he could do. He had only recently taken up the work, and the Committee could depend upon it that if the man was found not suitable for the work he would not be kept, as he was under no fixed engagement.

**MR. KENNY** said he was in sympathy with the remarks of the representatives of Fremantle, and he understood and appreciated the explanation of the Minister. But hon. members must be excused if they appeared somewhat sceptical in regard to appointments made from time to time. They could not shut their eyes to the fact, that there never was a visit paid to the old country by Mr. Davies, or other leading magnates of the Railway Department, but it was followed by an influx of English employees. Young men entered the civil service with the object of attaining a position, and emulation could not be created when vacancies were quietly filled by mysterious persons from England. It was not long since, after a visit of another gentleman to England, that several clerks were brought here, and pitchforked into positions over the heads of men who had been in the railway service for years. An explanation was given of that importation of clerks, but the explanation was not satisfactory; and it was interesting to know how many of these men were in the service now, and why some of them had been discharged.

**MR. LYALL HALL:** The desire of hon. members was to emphasise the undesirability of what might be called the imported element. The tendency on the part of Mr. Davies and other high officials in the department was to get all their officers from England, and it was a fact, that, when these men arrived in the colony, they, as a rule, had to be taught their business by men who had been in the service for some length of time. There was one particular instance, in which a stationmaster had been called upon to teach one of these young Englishmen imported about twelve months ago. This young man was sent to a suburban station, and had to be taught his business by an Australian, who was only receiving half the salary of the pupil, and

when the young man was proficient, the teacher was discharged and the pupil put in his place. A promise was given that the older hand should be taken back into the service, but, by that time, he had cleared out of the colony disgusted.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** That case had been inquired into.

**MR. HALL:** Most members objected to the constant influx of men into the Railway Department from England, inasmuch as plenty of men could be obtained in the colony to fill the positions. The fact was, the chief of the Railway Department and the higher officials all came from Britain, and they did not want any one colonial about them. It did not matter if a man possessed all the virtues and all the railway knowledge in the world, he could not get employed if he was an Australian, as compared with an Englishman.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Some of these cases had come within his own knowledge.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** All the cases had been inquired into and dealt with.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** The question was not one of nationality. If the Government departments were to be efficiently administered, a proper system of promotion must be encouraged, and it was impossible to believe that out of the 5,000 men in the Railway Department, not one could be found with the qualifications to fill the appointment which had been referred to. If it were true there was no fit man amongst the employees, there must be a most awful set of men in the service. The Commissioner must either tell the country that the men in the department were so inefficient that there was no one fit for a position of this kind, or he must admit that the necessary opportunities for promotion were not given. To bring an absolute stranger into the department over the heads of men who had served faithfully for years, was an outrage calculated to discourage all those engaged in the department; and that had been done in many cases.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** In one instance.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Seventeen men were imported not long ago, and men had to be told off for a fortnight each time to teach these new-comers their business.

If men were capable of teaching others the business, they were capable of doing the work themselves. It was admitted that in the department there were men capable of teaching the new hands.

**THE PREMIER:** By whom was it admitted? By the hon. member?

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** It was admitted by the Commissioner of Railways. He desired to know from the Commissioner whether, out of the 5,000 men in his employ, there was not one capable of taking the position under discussion.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** There was no one capable.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Then there must be a bad lot of men employed.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** Special qualifications were required.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Then, hon. members were to understand that out of 5,000 men in the department, there was no man capable of performing the outside work of inspection. There must be some particular reason why this man was selected. It was too much to expect the Committee to believe this was the only man available capable of doing this work. The Commissioner had complimented his staff on their efficiency, and, after his men had been working night and day, a stranger was put over their heads on the plea that not one of the old employees was capable of taking the position.

Item passed.

Item, Works Managers (2), included in general amount of £19,174:

**MR. HOLMES:** Prior to last year, two foremen had done this work; yet now that new work had ceased, and repairs alone remained to be attended to, two works managers were put in at £250 per annum; and the foreman who originally managed the works had to work for five days per week, instead of six. That was the state of affairs in the opinion of the public of Fremantle, and he hoped that such opinion was erroneous.

**THE PREMIER:** Such was not the case.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The item in question was a re-vote.

**MR. A. FORREST:** The accounts of the department were not comprehensible. After adding up the figures for the locomotive engineers' staff for this year, when there were 106 hands employed, he

found it was intended to spend some £4,000 or £5,000 more than was spent last year, when there were 112 employees.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** No; it was not to be spent. Last year he did not spend all the money voted.

**MR. A. FORREST:** But why ask for more money when there were less men? This was a time for cutting down.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** By adding up the items of the vote for 12 months ending 30th June, 1897, the total would be found to be £22,150, while the actual expenditure was £17,690. This year he asked for £19,974, or £2,176 less than he asked for last year. He did not expend the £22,000 last year, nor did he intend to spend the £19,974 this year, unless necessary.

**MR. A. FORREST:** Why the increased vote?

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** There was no increase. He was asking for less than he had asked for last year. The money would not be spent unless it were necessary.

**MR. A. FORREST:** The explanation of the Commissioner was not satisfactory. In every other department of the public service the salary of every officer was specified. Why should the Railway Department have a latitude in putting on or dismissing men? Officers of other departments complained that the railway employees got much higher salaries than were paid in other branches of the service. The reason was clear—because those salaries were not specified in the Estimates.

**MR. HALL:** The locomotive engineer's department appeared to be expensively managed with regard to superintendence. There were the locomotive engineer, the running outdoor superintendent, two works managers, and nine district loco inspectors and travelling inspectors, apart from clerks and loco foremen, etc. There were more loco inspectors than were employed on the Victorian railways, though the work in that colony was much heavier.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:** The hon. member was wrong.

**MR. HALL:** There was apparently a tendency for the heads and sub-heads of

departments to surround themselves with highly paid assistants, with the object of aggrandising their own position and increasing their own salaries. That tendency should be discouraged, as it was the ruin of all Government departments.

**THE PREMIER:** This was a difficult department to criticise, and it was necessary to trust the management. Since he had sat in the House, hon. members had never been able to deal with the department in detail. The railway estimates were prepared in a somewhat different way from those of other departments; but this department had regulations fixing the salaries of nearly all the officers named, and therefore it was not so much in the power of the department to alter salaries as on the face of it might appear; and, like many other departments, the Railway Department had to do much of the work of the country. If the traffic increased, more men must be put on, whether provided for in the Estimates or not. In the event of increased traffic, it was impossible to avoid expenditure, whether voted or not, because the trade of the country must be carried on. If, on the other hand, trade decreased, it was the duty of the management to reduce the expenditure all round. It was not like an ordinary department carried on from year to year, but it was a trading concern, which fluctuated according to the trade being done; and, although it was quite right for Parliament to exercise as much supervision as possible, especially in regard to the salaries of the officers—which was a matter all could express an opinion about, to some extent, at any rate—members could not, he felt, exercise much supervision in regard to general expenditure, because, as he said, it all depended on the trade to be done. If the trade increased the expenditure increased. As the train mileage increased so the expenditure increased, while on the other hand, if the train mileage decreased in consequence of the decrease of trade the expenditure was lower. He thought members would not gain much by criticising details of this big department.

**MR. WALLACE:** A great deal had been heard about heads and sub-heads, and he thought they had achieved considerable success in making these estimates so diffi-

cult that members could not understand them.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS :** They were all under regulations.

**MR. WALLACE :** When it was necessary to employ extra labour, such extra labour must be obtained, but that would apply to the employment of hands, and what he wished to get at was, what was included under "Contingencies." The item seemed to him to be a mysterious one. It included travelling expenses, and he would like to ask if the Committee were going to permit the Minister of Railways to expend any amount he liked in that way.

**THE PREMIER :** It was all by regulation.

**MR. WALLACE :** Some of these travelling allowances had, to his mind, been very excessive, and in these days of retrenchment, when men were thrown out of employment, were we going to allow an item which, he considered, was very large? He did not know the exact figures, but he was prepared to say from past experience that these travelling expenses would amount at the end of the year to what would be equal to the salaries of a great many retrenched from the department. The item should not be placed before the Committee without some approximate idea being given of the amount to be paid. Printing, stationery, postage, telegrams, telephone, rent, etc., were mentioned. Goodness only knew what "ctoetara" meant. Last year a good many of these things were detailed, but this year they were lumped under one head of miscellaneous, £31,000.

Item passed, and other items agreed to.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

#### ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS BILL.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and report adopted.

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

#### COOLGARDIE MINING EXHIBITION BILL.

SECOND READING.

**THE PREMIER**, in moving the second reading of this Bill, said: The object of the Bill is to vest a piece of land at Coolgardie, containing nearly six acres, in the municipal council of Coolgardie, for the purpose of a Mining Exhibition, School of Mines, Technological Institute and Geological Museum; and for other municipal purposes. The Bill proposes to give the municipal council power to borrow on the security of this land, on which a handsome building has been erected for the Exhibition, a sum not exceeding £5,000. It is also proposed that the provisions of the Police Act may be applied to the Exhibition premises. I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and report adopted.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.29 p.m. until the next Tuesday.