

Mr. Matheson could not discuss the merits of the Bill.

HON. A. P. MATHESON: Why should the consideration of the Electoral Bill be postponed?

THE PRESIDENT: The Colonial Secretary had stated all along that it was desired to postpone the consideration of the Electoral Bill until after the Constitution Acts Amendment Bill had been dealt with.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: How often had Mr. Matheson postponed the consideration of the petition in reference to the Commonwealth Bill?

HON. A. P. MATHESON: The postponement of the petition was for the convenience of the House.

Question—that the consideration of the Bill be postponed—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8.40 o'clock, until 7.30 the next evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 31st October, 1899.

Message: Assent to Bill—Papers presented—The Premier: Congratulation—Question: New Industries, Legislation—Question: Referendum and Voters—Motion for Papers: Conviction of James Kent (negatived)—Pharmacy and Poisons Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Statutory Declarations Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Cottesloe Lighting and Power (private) Bill, in Committee, reported—Sluicing and Dredging for Gold Bill, in Committee, Clauses 1 to 5, progress—Motion (Censure): Railway Administration, debate resumed, motion to adjourn (Division); Count-out.

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

PRAYERS.

MESSAGE—ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read, assenting to Supply Bill (No. 2).

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By THE PREMIER: 1, By-laws of Perth Council, parks and reserves; 2, Report of Royal Commission on Postal and Telegraphic Service; 3, Papers (as ordered) *re* Constable Love.

THE PREMIER—CONGRATULATION.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I desire to express pleasure on seeing the Premier back in his place, after his recent illness. I can assure the right hon. gentleman we have missed him very considerably—on this side of the House very much, and I am certain he has been much missed on the other side. We are glad to see him back, and I hope we shall continue our work, and perhaps with his presence here we may be able more readily to come to a speedy termination of the session. I am very pleased, as everybody else here is, to see the right hon. gentleman back in his place. (General applause.)

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I thank the hon. member for his kindness, and can assure him and other hon. members that I have been much inconvenienced in having to be absent from the deliberations of this Chamber, though I have endeavoured to keep informed of the proceedings. I regret to say I have not quite recovered, but hope I am in a fair way in that direction; and I trust we will all now work harmoniously together, with a view of bringing the session to a close as soon as possible. I may say that the little financial Bill I have promised to lay on the table will, I hope, be on the table to-morrow or next day; and that will be the last Bill of any importance the Government will bring down this session. I hope, too, that next week hon. members will agree to the Government business taking precedence of all other business for the remainder of the session. I think that now we have got our work before us, all on the table, the conclusion of our labours should be within measurable distance. I again thank the member for Albany, and all the members of the House; and I can assure members that I highly appreciate the kindness and

courtesy of the hon. member (Mr. Leake), which was nothing more, however, than I felt sure I might expect.

QUESTION — NEW INDUSTRIES: LEGISLATION.

MR. RASON (for Mr. Quinlan) asked the Premier, Whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce a measure this session for the encouragement of new industries, as approved by this House last session.

THE PREMIER replied that a Bill had been drafted, but it would not be possible to introduce the measure this session.

QUESTION — REFERENDUM AND VOTERS.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Premier:—

1, Whether he could inform the House what was the number of voters at present on the electoral rolls for this House.
2, Whether it was possible to increase this number at the next revision Courts, so as to affect the number voting on the referendum on the Commonwealth Bill, if taken.
3, If so, to what anticipated extent.

THE PREMIER replied:—1, 44,238.
2, The number will be increased in January next by the number registered by the last Registration Court on the 3rd October.
3, By about 1,500.

MOTION FOR PAPERS—CONVICTION OF JAMES KENT.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (for Mr. Vosper) moved:

That the whole of the papers relating to the case of James Kent, convicted of an assault on Dr. Russell, be laid on the table of the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): There was no objection whatever to placing the papers on the table of the House, but there was a danger to be apprehended from the practice. The papers dealt with the conviction of a man who received six months' imprisonment, which, when hon. members read the papers, they would say he richly deserved. The man threatened to appeal and took steps to do so, but he did not go on with the appeal. Then a petition was got up by the man's friends, and the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), who knew the man, took what he (the

Attorney General) thought was the right course, and the course an hon. member always ought to take in a case of this kind. The member for North Perth saw him (the Attorney General) about the matter, and after reading the evidence the member for North Perth was so satisfied that no further action was taken. Now another hon. member took the matter up, and it appeared that the House was becoming a court of appeal, even in the first instance, from convictions. The statute law provided an appeal from convictions to the Supreme Court, and persons convicted ought to take the proper measures to appeal to the Supreme Court; but they got some member to bring the case before the House, and he asked whether that was a wise procedure.

Motion put and negatived.

PHARMACY AND POISONS ACT AMEND- MENT BILL.

Read a third time, on motion by Mr. JAMES, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

STATUTORY DECLARATIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

COTTESLOE LIGHTING AND POWER (PRIVATE) BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

On motion by Mr. JAMES, the House resolved into Committee to consider the Bill.

[Clauses re-numbered in accordance with amendments introduced *pro forma*, and the Bill reprinted.]

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Limits of the Act:

MR. JAMES moved that after "Cottesloe," in line 3, the words "Buckland Hill" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 47, inclusive—agreed to.

Schedule—agreed to.

Preamble—amended consequentially.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

SLUICING AND DREDGING FOR GOLD BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Power to grant gold-mining leases of lakes, swamps, etc., subject to regulations:

MR. KINGSMILL moved that the words at the end of the clause, "or other land not suited to ordinary mining," be struck out. The power given by these words might be used, not perhaps by this Minister, but by some succeeding Minister of Mines, in a way that would be injudicious, and the objects of the Bill were fully met by other words in the clause.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: There was no objection to strike out the words.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Better not strike out all those words, but only "other lands." The amendment in this form would make the meaning definite, as applying to such swamps and marshes as were unfit for ordinary mining.

MR. KINGSMILL accepted the suggestion, and altered his amendment accordingly.

Amendment (as altered) put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 4—Term, rent and area:

MR. LEAKE moved that the words, "rental of one shilling per acre, payable yearly in advance," be struck out, with a view to inserting "royalty."

MR. A. FORREST: There must be some rent for the land, or persons might take up great areas of country, if no rent had to be paid.

MR. LEAKE: If a royalty was to be alternative to rent, an understanding might be come to on the point; but he desired to raise the question of making the payment a royalty; and if the principle were agreed to, the conditions necessary for giving effect to it might be embodied in regulations.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Why strike out the words, "payable yearly in advance"? One would expect the hon. member meant rather to reduce the rent and have a royalty as well.

MR. LEAKE: The object of the amendment was to raise a discussion on the principle of charging royalty instead of rent. He was not so wedded to the principle of a royalty as to say that no rent should be paid; but if there was to be a rental at all, it should be only nominal, and the principal payment should be a royalty, which might be

additional or alternative to a rental. Having spoken at some length on the principle of his amendment, in the debate on the second reading, he did not think it necessary to argue the matter further now, unless some hon. member brought up points he could deal with. Inasmuch as vast sums of money would have to be expended in testing big areas under the Bill, it would be almost impossible to fix a fair and proper rent as the sole charge; whereas no successful miner who took up one of these areas would object to pay a royalty, when it was to come out of profits and out of a going concern. Therefore the same objection to a royalty would not apply in a big venture like this, as would be the case with the ordinary alluvial miner, who might discover gold and endeavour to hide his discovery for fear of having to pay a royalty to the Crown. If the Minister could suggest a better way, the amendment could be withdrawn.

MR. MORGANS: The question raised by the amendment was interesting from the point of view of a practical miner, and there was no doubt the principle of payment by royalty should be embodied in the Bill. It was a practice amongst the proprietors of coal lands in England, and particularly such large estates as those of the Duchy of Cornwall and the Duchy of Lancaster, belonging to the Crown, to charge a rent for mining those properties on the principle of a royalty. In connection with those royalties, there was what was called a "dead rent," and this "dead rent" was merged into the royalty when the coal-mine became payable. Such a principle might be introduced into this Bill. There was a danger that very large areas might be taken up under the Bill, if no rent was to be paid; whereas if the principle of a royalty was embodied in the Bill, the only other requirement would be to impose conditions on those taking up areas under the Bill. But at the same time there would be a danger in imposing conditions, because this would be a new industry, and no one here knew beforehand what would be the cost of providing machinery and testing these lakes and swamps for gold. This being purely an experimental matter, the better plan would be to start with the principle of a royalty; and if afterwards it was found

that persons were taking up large areas and not working them properly, the Minister might then impose conditions by means of regulations to prevent frauds of that kind. In view of Clause 3, to which his attention had just been called, and which he had not before fully considered, he now thought the present clause only required the principle of a royalty to be embodied in it.

MR. A. FORREST: The amendment was one he could not support, notwithstanding the provision in Clause 3, which had been passed. There must be some time allowed for getting plant, and if no rent were charged for taking up these areas, any person might induce a number of others, might induce perhaps 50 members of Parliament, to take up great areas of country under this Bill; and as they would have six months in which to provide machinery before any rent would be payable, these areas might be taken up for speculative purposes, the parties knowing that no rent would have to be paid in the first instance. Such an operation might begin on the very day the Bill was passed, and there would be nothing paid to the Treasury for the areas taken up. He suggested there should be a rent of 6d. an acre and a royalty of 6d. an ounce. In the case of coal lands on the Collie, the rent was 3d. and the royalty 1s. a ton. A certain rent should be charged when the application was put into the Mines Office.

MR. EWING: It had been generally conceded that this class of mining would have to be carried on by mining companies having considerable capital, and there was something in the suggestion of the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), that if no rent was charged there would be a tendency for persons to take up large areas, and put the Government to considerable cost in surveys.

MR. MONGER: No. The parties taking up the land would have to pay for the survey.

MR. EWING: They might have to pay a certain proportion; but if a person acquired a preferential right to 5,000 acres under the Crown, that person should pay something to the Crown for the privilege of taking up that area. A charge had been imposed on the dividends of mining companies by a Bill lately passed, and that was practically equivalent to a

royalty. The rent for these areas should not be unreasonable.

THE PREMIER: A dividend tax of 5 per cent. would make little difference to a company.

MR. EWING: Mining companies generally paid reasonable rentals. In respect of coal, tin, and other mines, there was a distinct basis of calculation, but with gold there was no such basis; therefore let the rent be reasonable, and attack the profits by means of the dividend tax passed this session.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It seemed to be the general opinion that there should be a royalty payable on the profits derived from these areas.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Royalties on the gold, not on the profits.

THE MINISTER OF MINES said he would not waive the rent altogether, because persons applying for such areas ought to put down some money as a guarantee of good faith. As he did not believe in such areas being held for speculative purposes, it was reasonable to ask for a certain amount of rent in advance. He was prepared to reduce the rent to 6d. an acre, and then to charge a royalty on the profits.

MR. LEAKE: Royalties were on produce, not on profits.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A recent Act of South Australia provided not only for rent, but a royalty on profits derived from mines.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But we had already a dividend tax.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Nevertheless the rental proposed in the Bill was very low.

MR. KINGSMILL: More than was charged for pastoral leases.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Some of these areas might be immensely rich; if so, the State should derive some substantial benefit therefrom. He would accept a rental of 6d. an acre and a royalty of 6d. per pound sterling on the net profit derived from the lease, as in the South Australian Act; or, if hon. members chose, let a royalty be on the gold won, but such royalty would have to be more than 6d. per ounce: say 2s. an ounce royalty and 6d. an acre rent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Minister's suggestion seemed quite inapplicable. There was already a tax of 5 per cent. on

dividends, and unless the royalty were chargeable on the gold won, the true principle of royalties would be lost sight of. He moved that the word "shilling," in line two, be struck out, and "one penny" inserted in lieu thereof. He would further move that after the word "advance," in line three, the words "and shall pay a royalty annually of — on all gold won" be inserted. He would also suggest 2s. 6d. an ounce royalty, which rate would inflict no hardship on a company which got the land for a nominal sum. However, a block less than three miles square would be sufficient. That would mean 5,660 acres, involving a deposit of over £25 and a survey fee, so that the company applying must pay the Treasury about £100, an ample guarantee of their *bona fides*. Moreover, the company must spend £3,000 in the first 12 months upon every area taken up. The rent should not be large, as such companies would risk the whole of their money.

MR. A. FORREST: Like other mining companies. The hon. member wished to kill the Bill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; as the Bill stood any company proposing to do *bona fide* work would put on much more than £3,000 worth of machinery, and if not *bona fide* the necessity for putting machinery of even that value would make them pause.

MR. MOORHEAD: The price of machinery was changing daily.

MR. LEAKE withdrew his amendment.

MR. KINGSMILL: A rent of 3d. per acre per annum would probably meet the objections raised, and such rent on a 5,000 acre lease would amount to £52 10s., and the survey fee would not be less than £50. These people would have to put up over £100 in rent, for a start, and to hold a title to the ground for 12 months they would have to erect certain machinery. Therefore the events suggested by the member for West Kimberley would not come about. These leases would not be more salable than ordinary gold mining leases, and speculators paused before they spent £100 with which they could take up a lot of ordinary gold mining leases. He suggested that the word "one" before "shilling" should be struck out.

MR. ILLINGWORTH accepted the amendment.

MR. ROBSON: A rental of 6d. seemed to be fair, and he was glad that the principle of a royalty had been brought forward, but in fixing the royalty at so much per ounce we would be establishing a somewhat inequitable principle, because gold varied in value, and in some lakes the gold won might be worth £2 17s. 6d. or £3 per ounce, whereas, further away, the gold won might be worth £4 per ounce. It would be better to make the royalty a percentage on the gold won, say 5 per cent.

MR. MORGANS: Three per cent.

MR. ROBSON: Three per cent. then. In dealing with the principle of royalty we were not dealing with a new thing; we had the principle of rental and royalty in connection with coal mines, and the Government received from the lessees of the Abrolhos Islands a heavy royalty for the guano. There was a fixed royalty, he thought, of something like £1,500 a year, and after that the lessees had to pay 10s. for every ton of guano shipped to Europe or elsewhere.

THE PREMIER: There was only a royalty, he thought.

MR. ROBSON: From what he had been told he understood there was a fixed amount.

THE PREMIER said he was not sure.

MR. ROBSON: There was a royalty of 10s. a ton on the product which was shipped to Europe. He supported the amendment for a rental of 6d. per acre, and there should be a royalty on the percentage of gold won.

MR. RASON: In considering the question of rental and area, the Committee should not forget that we were dealing with a new industry, and in the establishment of new industries it had been the practice to offer some inducement in the shape of a bonus or free grant to persuade people to invest capital in a new industry in this country. The areas which it was proposed to lease had been waste lands for many years, and unless capitalists were induced to embark in the enterprise proposed this area would remain waste land for all time. Although he had every reason to believe that the lakes and marshes of the colony contained gold, it was only an assumption; the mere proof would necessitate an outlay of a considerable sum of money. It would be almost impossible to induce

capitalists to embark in an enterprise of this kind if in the first place they had to make heavy deposits for rental and survey fees. Before capitalists would invest in dredging machinery they must conduct a series of experiments which would either prove the existence of gold in our lakes or not, and these experiments would show whether the colony had a valuable asset in the lakes or not. Surely it was necessary for some inducement to be offered, and the proper course, he thought, was to give to the first five or six applicants for these areas a term of, say, one year free of rental; that was not a very great inducement; greater inducements were offered for other industries. The proposal that the rental should be 3d. per acre was fair, and the royalty of 2s. 6d. an ounce could not be objected to. If a stumbling block in the shape of a high rental were placed in the way those likely to invest money in an industry of this kind would say that as they were attempting something highly problematical, there was no inducement to embark capital in the enterprise.

MR. A. FORREST: The Bill, he understood, was brought forward in the interests of the country, and not for the benefit of speculators. If the rental was made low the object which the Government had in view would not be attained. This was essentially a work for capitalists, and if the rental of 1d. per acre as proposed by the member for Central Murchison, or 3d. or 6d. per acre as proposed by others, was adopted, the Government would find themselves inundated with applications for areas close to the goldfields. If the rental charge was small we should find people taking up areas and holding them for a year, and after that some friend would come along and apply for the area, and the thing might go on for years, because this was done in connection with the pastoral, agricultural, and timber industries; where there was a loophole people took advantage of it. People who were willing to invest £20,000 or £30,000 in an industry of this kind would not object to spending £100 in rental. He would like to see the royalty fixed at 6d. an ounce. The Government did not care about making money out of this class of industry, because at the present time there was no

royalty in connection with ordinary gold-mining; there was a rental of £1 an acre, but what was that to a mine like the Boulder. Sixpence an ounce was a fair thing. We should be doing an injury to the people who wished to take up the areas if we fixed the rental at a small amount so as to give time to look over the country. The people who were here at the present time, and who wished to embark in this industry would not object to a rental of 6d. an acre. They had come here *bona fide* to work these areas. Although the Bill mentioned 5,000 acres as the maximum area, yet any person would be allowed to take up 100 or 200 acres. There might be as much gold in 100 acres as in 10,000 acres.

MR. WALLACE: In speaking on the second reading of the Bill, the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) stated we had nothing very valuable to give away in these lakes; yet some members now wanted to hamper the Bill with conditions. The Minister of Mines told the Committee he had given great consideration to the question of a royalty, and suggested that the royalty should be on profits. It was evident the Minister did not understand the thing, for he wanted members to support a royalty on profits.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: What did the hon. member know about it?

MR. WALLACE: Not knowing anything about the Bill, he was careful to say he did not know; but the Minister professed to know all about it, and yet he made the absurd suggestion to impose a royalty on profits. This was simply a Bill for capitalists, and if it had been called "a Bill for the speculative capitalist or swindler," we might have understood it. Would it be wise to give away this land at 3d. an acre, as suggested by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) to the class of people who would take it up; or would it be wiser to leave the rental at 6d. or 1s. an acre, to suppress that class of people, the men of capital? The Bill would crush out the smaller men, for there would be no such thing as an alluvial miner on a lake or a swamp. He asked the Minister to support an amendment for a rental of not less than 6d. an acre.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The hon. member was a perfect Solon, no

doubt, in his own estimation, and it was to be hoped the hon. member's wisdom was as much admired round the House as it was by the member himself. The hon. member had been saying it was wise to do this or it was not wise to do that, and the hon. member had asked him (the Minister) to further consider the matter. Yet the hon. member himself seemed to have given no consideration to the subject, for he had informed the Committee that he (the Minister) desired to place a royalty on profits, as if that were something unusual and absurd. The hon. member evidently had not studied such legislation elsewhere, or consulted anyone acquainted with it. In South Australia.—

MR. WALLACE: There were no gold-mines in South Australia.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: In South Australia, a Dredging Bill had just been passed; and although there might be no gold mines in that colony, yet it was probable the Legislature there would put as much common sense and wisdom into the framing of such a Bill, whether there were gold mines in the colony or not. That Bill provided that at the end of the 19th century there should be a rental payable and a certain royalty for taking up land solely for the purpose of dredging for gold; that there should be a certain royalty on the profits derived from the land. These were not his (the Minister's) ideas only, for they had been put into practical operation in South Australia.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They were not good, all the same.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It would be found that the principle of a royalty as applied to a Bill of this kind had been adopted in nearly all countries which had legislated in regard to dredging for gold. If the Committee would agree now to strike out the words "one shilling," and leave a blank for the present, members could then consider what should be put in lieu thereof.

Amendment (to strike out "one shilling") put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved that the word "sixpence" be inserted in lieu of the words struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved that after the word "advance," in the third line, there be inserted the words, "and

shall pay a royalty of two shillings and sixpence per ounce on all gold won."

THE MINISTER OF MINES suggested that as the lease was to be for 21 years, it would be better to make the amendment read: "and also a royalty of two shillings and sixpence."

MR. ILLINGWORTH accepted the suggestion, and altered his amendment accordingly.

MR. LOCKE: Although members had appeared anxious to support the proposal he first brought forward to provide a means for dredging for gold, yet now the general desire seemed to be to impose conditions that would hamper this new industry, and might crush it out. He regretted to see this disposition amongst members. The first trouble had been that the persons who desired and intended to take up land under the conditions of a Bill of this kind could not get sufficient area for the purpose; that instead of being allowed to take up 640 acres under the existing Act, they should be allowed to take up 5,000 acres. He was advised that those who intended to invest in this business did not care whether the payment was to be 6d. or 1s. an acre, but they did want a sufficient area. Still the Committee should be careful not to impose such conditions as would crush out this industry. His own idea was that 1s. an acre was too much, and if there was to be a royalty of 1s. an ounce, he believed that speculators might be induced to invest in what might become a big industry. If there was not a large output of gold resulting from this industry, as he expected there would be under fair conditions, yet there was this consolation, that the testing of these areas would not cost the country a penny. Therefore the Committee should make the terms as reasonable as possible for inducing persons to test these lakes and swamps. The areas granted must be fairly large, and sufficient time should be given in which to pay the rent.

MR. EWING: How long?

MR. LOCKE: Three months after the lease had been pegged out.

MR. SOLOMON: Years ago, concessions were given to timber companies, and difficulties arose which would repeat themselves in regard to the large areas proposed by this Bill to be granted.

Five or six hundred acres would be sufficient for a dredging lease.

MR. MONGER agreed with the proposal for a royalty, but suggested that it be 1s. instead of 2s. 6d. per ounce. If numerous speculators embarked in dredging enterprises, the amount of royalty could subsequently be increased.

Amendment (Mr. Illingworth's) put and negatived.

MR. A. FORREST moved that the words "and also a royalty of one shilling per ounce upon all gold won" be inserted after "advance," in line three.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A 1s. royalty would suffice under the Mineral Lands Act. Gold found associated with minerals obtained on a mineral lease was subject to a royalty of 1 per cent. of its value, or about 10d. an ounce. This was a precedent; and the royalty of 1s. could be increased, after the dredging industry had become established.

Amendment (Mr. A. Forrest's) put and passed.

MR. GEORGE moved that the word "may" in line 3 be struck out, and "shall" inserted. It should not be possible for anyone to "drive a coach and four" through such a Bill. The clause did not read, "the area of a dredging lease shall not include an area exceeding 640 acres," but stated that the grant "may" include an area of 640 acres. Unless that word "may" were altered the area might be increased to 10,000 or to 50,000. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: No.] It was useless to hurry the discussion of the Bill. Consider the trouble entailed by the hurried manner in which the alluvial question had been dealt with in the House. Let the Committee define what area it was desired to give.

MR. A. FORREST: 5,760 acres.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As the clause stood, a person could take up 10 acres or any area up to 640 acres.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A lease could include any area not exceeding 640 acres. There would be no risk run if the word "may" were allowed to stand.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. A. FORREST moved that in line 3 the words "not exceeding 640 acres" be struck out and "not less than 1,000 acres nor more than 5,000 acres" be inserted in lieu thereof.

MR. CONNOR: If the maximum area was increased, a minimum area should not be inserted. If the minimum area was put at 1,000 acres, that would prevent a working miner taking up a lease.

MR. A. FORREST said he was willing to amend his proposal so that the maximum area should not exceed 5,760 acres.

MR. QUINLAN: It had been pointed out to him that if people were allowed to take up small areas, they might interfere with companies working large areas. If a person took up 50 acres in the centre of a lake, it would interfere with a company wishing to take up 5,000 acres. He was always in sympathy with the small man, but we had to consider what was best for the country generally. He had been informed by a person who was the instigator of this Bill being brought forward that there should be a minimum of 3,000 and a maximum of 5,000 acres; therefore he hoped the member for West Kimberley would not alter his amendment.

MR. OATS: The member for West Kimberley was quite right in fixing a maximum, but no minimum should be stated. Many of the small lakes in the colony did not contain 500 acres, and he would like to see the small man get a bit of gold if it was to be found.

MR. CONOLLY: The Bill was undoubtedly framed in the interests of those who had large capital to invest in this undertaking, but while the industry offered an inducement to people with large capital there was no reason why, in the event of the small man desiring to go into this industry, he should be almost prohibited from doing so by having to take up a large area. The Bill provided that a considerable area, 640 acres, could be taken up, and if those who desired to invest their money in the industry wished to acquire larger areas they could take up more leases.

MR. WALLACE: The Committee did not desire to fix a minimum, only a maximum. A short while ago the member for West Kimberley advocated an increase in rental to prevent a monopoly, now he wished to fix a minimum to prevent the small man getting land.

MR. MONGER: There should be no minimum fixed; if a man wished to apply for 100 or 500 acres he should be enabled

to do so. He moved a further amendment to strike out "six hundred and forty" and insert "five thousand" in lieu thereof.

At 6-30, the CHAEMAN left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

Amendment—that the words "six hundred and forty" be struck out—put and passed.

MR. MONGER moved that the words "five thousand," be inserted in lieu of those struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. HIGHAM: Some minimum area should be fixed, and he moved that the following words be added at the end of the clause: "and not less than three hundred and twenty acres." If permission were granted, this provision would attract all sorts of applicants to take up areas of various sizes ranging up to the maximum, and it was better that small areas should be open to applicants.

MR. WALLACE: No minimum should be fixed in the Bill, because the provision that machinery to the value of £3,000 should be put on a lease was in itself a guarantee that no small area would be applied for. Having fixed the maximum it was not necessary to fix a minimum.

MR. MITCHELL: The condition requiring a certain expenditure on each lease rendered it unnecessary to fix a minimum area in the Bill. The land contemplated to be leased was of no value to the country at present, and there had been too much talk about conditions. We should not bother about fixing a minimum area.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The necessity for fixing a minimum area was not evident to him, though he understood the object was to prevent persons from taking up small areas near a larger area, for the purpose of levying blackmail on the lessee of the larger area. His own preference was to leave the matter open, so that all classes of persons might apply for areas; and as the land to be leased could be used only for dredging and sluicing for gold, that condition in itself was a sufficient limitation, because if the land were used for any other purpose, the lease would be liable to forfeiture.

Amendment (Mr. Higham's) put and negatived.

MR. CONNOR moved that the words "and not more than ten leases shall be granted for the first year after the passing of this Act" be added to the clause. He would bow to the opinion of the Committee as to the exact number of leases, or the maximum total area which should be given to speculators, but the whole of the auriferous lakes of the colony should not be given away, as they might be under the clause.

Amendment put and negatived, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 5—Covenants, etc.:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved that after "rent" in Sub-clause 1, the words "and royalty" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. WALLACE: Sub-clause 2 should evidently be read with Clause 3. By the latter, the Minister apparently had no power to grant leases for any purposes other than sluicing and dredging for gold; therefore it was unnecessary to provide in Sub-clause 2 of Clause 5 that the lessee should not use the land for other purposes without the permission of the Minister. To give such power might be dangerous. He moved that the words "without the permission in writing of the Minister," in Sub-clause 2, be struck out.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: In some cases the Minister might be asked to allow the land to be used for other purposes than sluicing and dredging, without infringing the spirit of the Act. It would of course be illegal to grant permission to mine for gold on the property, but the Minister might permit the water of the lake to be used for the benefit of the public. The proviso was therefore necessary.

MR. VOSPER: It was dangerous to give the Minister too much latitude. Surely it was not proposed that the lessees should have a monopoly of any water that might fall on their leases?

MR. A. FORREST: They would pay 6d. an acre.

MR. EWING: But the water belonged to the public.

MR. VOSPER: Exactly. The lessee only had the area for sluicing and dredging, and could not claim a 5,000 acre monopoly of water.

MR. LEAKE: The Committee's object was merely to let the leaseholder seek for gold by the special process of dredging, and not to give him full mining rights over the enormous area of 5,000 acres. The Committee had already gone too far by giving a lease, not only of the bed of the lake, but of the foreshore, and we must be careful not to interfere with other people's rights of way and rights of water. Take care that no Minister had power to increase in an indirect manner the rights of the dredging lessee, as might be done under Sub-clause 2. He would support the amendment.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member would make the Bill so strict as to be useless.

MR. LEAKE: The Bill has not been before the Committee long enough for due consideration.

MR. A. FORREST: Was not a fortnight long enough?

MR. LEAKE: Every time the question was discussed it assumed different phases. An hon. member (Mr. Vosper) had suggested that the Government should reserve power to grant ordinary gold-mining leases on reefs running into such lakes, which reefs could not be dredged. True, to do this might establish a kind of dual title, but it would be a pity that large areas should be established free from all forms of mining, simply because leaseholders under this Bill might have acquired certain surface rights. This land would be absolutely shut up from everybody except the leaseholder, who would only have the surface rights to the land. He would support the amendment.

MR. MORGANS: The question of reefs being found in these lakes must be taken into consideration. Persons who obtained leases under the Bill could not work reefs, because according to the provisions of the Bill they were confined to sluicing and dredging, and a reef could not be worked by sluicing and dredging.

MR. KINGSMILL: But the reef could be looked up.

MR. MORGANS: That was not the point we were discussing. As far as mining operations were concerned it was impossible, under the Bill, to work reefs, because power was only given for sluicing and dredging, and we did not want to see any special rights given to the holders

of these leases. The Bill should be hedged round with protective conditions. The object the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) had was to prevent any abuse by working veins, if they were found; that was quite right. Some steps should be taken in the event of the discovery of veins during the sluicing and dredging operations, that these veins could be taken up as leases under the Goldfields Act.

MR. VOSPER: It would be absolutely necessary for the Bill to contain some provision to meet the case which he had suggested previously. If there was going to be a dual title in connection with these sluicing operations then we would be laying up trouble for the future. If the Bill was going to give people the right to reefs as well as to the mud on the surface of the lake the best thing to be done would be to strike out Sub-clause 2 and insert a new clause later on providing that if a lode or reef was discovered on a lease which had been granted for the purposes of sluicing and dredging, the provisions of the Mining on Private Property Act should apply. Hon. members knew that in the event of a person discovering a reef or lode on private property that person had first of all to apply to the owner of the land, and if the owner of the land was willing to allow the ground to be worked it became a matter of a private contract between the owner on the one hand and the applicant on the other; but if the owner was unwilling for the person to work the reef then the person applied to the Minister, who sent an inspector to inspect the land, and afterwards the person wishing to work the ground obtained a lease of the ground and paid a certain amount for compensation. A valuable lode might be discovered in a lake.

THE PREMIER: How would it be got at?

MR. VOSPER: If the hon. member had seen some of the great coal mines at home and elsewhere where shafts were put down through sand-drifts, which fell in again and again, he would see how these reefs could be worked. The difficulty was overcome by freezing the ground solid, then digging it up and putting down iron cylinders. If that was done for the sake of coal, then, if a reef, like some of those at Kalgoorlie, was dis-

covered in a lake bed there would be means of getting at it.

THE PREMIER: Two or three titles could not be given to the same ground.

MR. VOSPER: If it was necessary we should give more. The Bill gave the right to sluice and dredge in the lake.

THE PREMIER: Could not a reef be dredged?

MR. VOSPER: Would the Premier suggest how a reef could be dredged?

THE PREMIER: How was the reef at Fremantle dredged?

MR. VOSPER: It was blasted first, then dredged afterwards.

THE PREMIER: The work could be done without blasting at all with powerful dredges.

MR. VOSPER: If that was the case then he would declare war against the Bill absolutely. He had come here to support the Bill, but if a leaseholder was to be allowed to take all within the lease then he could not vote for the Bill.

THE PREMIER: A lease took in everything.

MR. VOSPER said he was glad the cloven hoof had been shown here. To grant a monopoly of 5,000 acres to a person to work reefs and alluvial was not right. He was opposed to the Bill, and he was glad he had discovered in time what was the object.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If we were to accept the interpretation of the Premier, the wisest thing would be to throw out the Bill and do so without hesitation; but the Bill only proposed to grant surface rights. If it was intended by the Bill to grant the whole of the gold inside the pegs to the leaseholder the proposal was a dangerous one, and the measure ought at once to be thrown out without consideration; but what the Bill proposed to do was to give rights to certain persons to dredge or sluice in a lake. A reef might go right through the centre of a lake. The Orient Company were now working a reef in Lake Austin and were getting valuable gold from the reef, which was running right into the lake, and this reef might be followed for half a mile. If the provisions of this Bill were carried out there would be nothing to prevent a company taking up a lease of the lake right up to the margin of the Orient ground, and if the Premier's argument was correct, that company could take all

the gold within their pegs and prevent the Orient Company driving under the lake for the gold; but that was not the intention of the Bill.

THE PREMIER: What else did it mean then?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The difficulties had already been pointed out. Under the Bill people were to be allowed to take up land for the purpose of sluicing and dredging for gold in lakes, swamps, and marshes.

THE PREMIER: When a person got a lease, who would have any right to go on to that lease but the lessee?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Provision should be made for that. At the present time a miner had a right to go on private property and search for gold, and the fact that a person held the fee simple of certain land did not prevent a miner going on to that property to look for gold. Permission was given by the Bill to take away the gold by a certain means. It had been pointed out on the second reading of the Bill, that we were likely to have a reflex of the mining difficulty if we were not careful over this Bill. If a man had a lease of 5,000 acres of land and a reef was discovered, was the reefer to be prevented from going on to the land? There could be no danger in giving the powers provided under the clause if some provision were made to deal with reefs, should they be discovered; unless some such provisions were made we should be thrown back on the old difficulty which we had in connection with Section 36 of the Goldfields' Act. The Orient reef might be found to go into Lake Austin for two or three miles, and a lease might be granted for land containing the reef which gave three or four ounces to the ton.

THE PREMIER: The Orient company could not go beyond their boundaries now.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was so.

THE PREMIER: Then why cite the case?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Provision should be made to enable the company to go beyond their boundaries.

THE PREMIER: The company should get another lease then.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No conditions other than those given by an ordinary title should be given under this Bill. If it was proposed that a leaseholder should

have all within his pegs, were the Committee prepared to allow a lease of 5,000 acres at 6d. per acre and royalty to be paid? The Committee would be acting wisely by granting leases for dredging and sluicing for gold in marshes and lakes.

MR. MONGER: That was all that was desired.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If that was so, then provision might be made for contingencies that might or might not arise. If the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) moved a new clause in regard to mining on private property, he (Mr. Illingworth) would support it. If the words in the clause "without the permission of the Minister" were retained, in the event of a reef being found the Minister could give power to the lessee to work that reef. The present Minister might not exercise such a power, but the present Minister might not always be in office; and in giving all the power stated in the clause, why should we put in a proviso empowering the Minister to do something different from the intention of the Bill?

MR. EWING: The amendment did appear at first sight to be deserving of support; but on looking closely at the Bill he saw that it was a mistake to assume, in reading Clause 5, that the powers there stated were those which the Minister was to exercise under the Bill. The fact was that the only powers given to the Minister were those contained in Clause 3, namely, to grant a gold-mining lease of any Crown land for the purpose of sluicing or dredging for gold. Therefore the Minister had no power to grant land for any purpose other than sluicing and dredging for gold. The words proposed to be struck out were necessary to the clause, for they evidently meant other purposes connected with the dredging and sluicing for gold. All that Clause 5 meant was that a person taking a lease must covenant not to do anything other than dredging and sluicing for gold, without the consent of the Minister; and those qualifying words meant that if a lessee wanted to construct a tramway or a bridge over certain water, the Minister would have power under this clause to grant him the right to do that, as being necessary to sluicing and dredging for gold. As to the interjection made by the

Premier, that the Bill gave power to dredge a reef—

THE PREMIER: If a reef were struck in a lake or swamp, the lessee could do anything with dredging, the same as was done in dredging rock at the bottom of a river.

MR. EWING: The lessee could not follow the rock down by means of a dredge, and all he could do in that way would be to take the cap off the reef. There was nothing serious in the objection that had been made to the qualifying words being left in the clause.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) was under a misconception with regard to the powers the Minister would have under this sub-clause, and the hon. member seemed to think a Minister would have power to grant rights just as he liked.

MR. LEAKE: Nobody thought that; but Ministers thought so sometimes.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It seemed to be thought that this power would allow the Minister to grant permission for lode-mining, but the Minister would have no power to give authority for mining in any other way than by dredging and sluicing. Hon. members seemed to think that Ministers wanted to get through things. The difficulty was for the Minister to keep other people straight, and prevent them from getting through things. The Minister usually had no difficulty in keeping straight himself, but he had all sorts of arguments and persuasions offered to him by persons who wanted some advantage; and some members of this House might come to him and ask him to grant a lease under this Bill for reef-mining, and might say there was power in the Bill for him to do it. His own experience was that persons holding leases from the Crown were very jealous as to any action of theirs which might render their leases liable to forfeiture. On the whole, it would be better not to take out the words from the clause.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison, speaking for the first time since his election, and received with general applause) said he agreed in part with the observations of the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing); but the gist of the powers conferred on the Minister lay not so much

in the wording of Clause 3 as in the regulations which were to be made under the Bill, and which would not be brought before the House. Under Clause 3 the Minister might grant a lease for this purpose, subject to the regulations which might be in force: therefore as the Minister would have power to make regulations, he might include in them purposes ancillary to dredging and sluicing for gold, and in that way might grant greater powers to a lessee than were contemplated by the Committee. We should be extremely careful in defining the powers which were to be granted to a Minister; and he (Mr. Moorhead) agreed with the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) that it was a mistake to include in the Bill the word "lease," for the real word should be "license." By granting a lease, all persons other than the lessee were shut out from that particular ground; whereas by granting a license to dredge and sluice for gold, other persons would be allowed to go on the ground for any purpose other than that for which the license was granted. The difficulty was pointed out by the member for Central Murchison. He agreed with the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), that some provision should be made in the Bill with regard to reefing on land to be leased under the Bill. His own intention had been to propose a provision, to the effect that a reward should be granted to a man who discovered a reef in the course of his dredging operations. A preferential right should be given in such a case to the discoverer, and he (Mr. Moorhead) would support a provision to the effect that in the event of a lessee discovering a reef, the provisions of the Mining on Private Property Act should apply. The powers which were purported to be granted in Clause 3 were not set out, but lay in the regulations; and he was, therefore, in favour of the suggestion of the member for North-East Coolgardie, that in the event of the discovery of a reef, a preferential right should be given to the discoverer to mark out a lease of the ordinary area. It would be monstrous that the lessee should have the sole right to carry on reefing upon a lease of 5,000 acres. On the other hand, having given the right to sluice and dredge for gold, all reefs which might be there ought not

to be locked up under the provisions of a lease. He therefore thought the Minister should accept the suggestion of the member for North-East Coolgardie.

MR. LEAKE: Was the Minister willing to strike out the words "without the permission of the Minister in writing"?

THE MINISTER OF MINES said he did not object to the words being struck out.

MR. LEAKE: After what the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) had said, the Minister might well agree to strike out those words, because he had power to make regulations, and he might therein give effect to the intention of the words at the end of this clause; and the Minister would of course take care to act strictly within the scope of the Bill.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. LEAKE said he quite agreed with the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) that a lease was a wrong form of tenure; and in order to test the feeling of the Committee, he moved that the word "demised" be struck out. If this amendment were accepted, it would mean the recasting of the Bill so as to be in accordance with the amendment, by changing the word "lease" to "license" in other parts of the Bill. Talk of "lakes" in this country was rather a misnomer, for the water was generally absent.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: What difference would it make by calling the tenure "license" instead of "lease"?

MR. LEAKE: Supposing a person leased one of the big salt lakes: there might in a wet season be a considerable amount of water, and if such small things as watering a camel or shooting a duck were to be construed literally as something different from what the lessee was permitted to do, that might be held to forfeit his lease, because the lease would be to dredge and sluice for gold, and under that lease no other person could go on that land; whereas if the land were held under "license" to dredge and sluice for gold, any other person might go on the land for purposes other than dredging and sluicing for gold. A lease would exclude everybody but the lessee, whereas a license would grant permission to enter the land only for the specific purpose stated in the license, and this would not exclude other persons from going on the land for other purposes.

MR. MORGANS: Could the land be granted to a man for 21 years under the tenure of a license?

MR. LEAKE: Yes; by statute.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The question was entirely one of policy. We had to consider whether it was likely the tenure of the license suggested by the hon. member would be such as to induce any person to take up such land as was contemplated under the Bill for the purpose of dredging and sluicing for gold; whether any person taking up such land would think it worth while to expend a large amount of capital in machinery and in working the ground, when the conditions of his tenure would permit any other person to come on that ground and search for gold or anything else, so long as he did not actually dredge and sluice for gold. If the alteration proposed by the hon. member would have the effect of deterring persons from taking up land for the purpose contemplated by the Bill, then the measure would become a dead letter. On the other hand, it was contended that it would not interfere with dredge lessees if men with miners' rights were allowed to search for reefs on such leases; but from past experience it was obvious that a dual title would lead to trouble.

MR. MONGER: The South Australian Act, which was somewhat similar to this Bill, granted dredging areas up to 5,000 acres:

MR. MORGANS: And the conditions were 6d. an acre rent and 6d. an ounce royalty.

MR. MONGER: With the exception of the Orient lease, he did not believe there was a solitary 24-acre patch on any portion of the lake areas in this colony.

MR. VOSPER: Wrong! There were such leases on Bulong Lake, Lake Austin, and Lake Nannine—some hundreds of acres.

THE PREMIER: Were they being worked?

MR. VOSPER: It was doubtful how far they were worked.

MR. MONGER: No instance was known to him of anyone attempting to dredge or sluice the large quartz formations outcropping on some of the lakes. Any person dredging alluvial, who happened to strike a rich reef, should at all events have a pre-emptive right to the advan-

tages appertaining to the discovery. The Bill did not give that prior right. A workman employed on the dredge would have the right to apply for a 24-acre block of reefing ground on the dredging lease of his employer. He was in favour of the Bill as brought down, but hon. members like the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) instead of moving amendment after amendment, would do more good by moving that the Bill be suspended.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The effect of substituting the word "license" for "lease" in the Bill would not enable anyone to take up a gold-mining lease on ground the subject of a dredging lease, because, according to the Goldfields Act, land held under license was not Crown land. He was willing to add to the Bill provisions enabling lode matter to be mined for; for though he had never granted gold-mining leases in lakes, nevertheless if lode matter were discovered there it should be worked, and not locked up. The simplest solution of the difficulty would be to bring such lodes under the Mining on Private Property Act; but it would not do to make the dredging lessees' titles less secure than they were under the Bill as it stood. If all such land under lease were dealt with like land under the Act referred to, many objections to the Bill would disappear, for lode country could then be taken up under gold-mining leases, the lessee paying compensation to the owner, or other holder of such land. This would not give much trouble to dredging lessees, for no one would pay 1d. an acre and survey fees, unless valuable lodes were contained in the land; nor did he think there would be much land applied for under such conditions for lode mining. It was, however, ridiculous to imagine that the dredging lessee and the lode miner could work the land together; therefore if lake country were to be used for lode mining, the intending lode miner must be given a distinct title as against the other party; and by bringing the land under the Mining on Private Property Act, this could be done.

MR. VOSPER: One way out of the difficulty would be to allow the clause to pass as it stood, to leave other clauses alone, to deal with this question of demising or leasing, and then to insert a

clause, of which he had prepared a rough draft, which would conserve the rights of the alluvial miner, and the proprietary rights of the country. The first part of his clause read as follows :

In the event of any reefs, lodes or veins being discovered to traverse the rock underlying the alluvium in any lakes, swamps, or marshes, leased under the provisions of this Act, the provisions of the Mining on Private Property Act, 1898, shall apply to the lands containing such lodes, reefs, or veins, and any person desiring to work such lodes, reefs, or veins shall proceed as if the lands leased under this Act were private property.

MR. MONGER : How would the hon. member define what was gold in a reef ?

MR. VOSPER : The definition was in the Goldfields Act and in the Mining on Private Property Act, and would apply to this Bill. The new clause then had a proviso to the effect that in the event of any lessee or lessees under this Bill being the discoverer or discoverers of any such reefs, lodes or veins, such lessee or lessees should be entitled to a reward claim not to exceed 50 acres in extent, and that all the provisions of the Goldfields Act of 1895, and of any amending Acts, and of the regulations made thereunder, should apply to such reward claims. If the sluicing or dredging lessee found a lode, he could apply to the Minister under this new clause for a reward claim up to 50 acres, and to work such claim under the provisions of the Act of 1895, and subsequent mining Acts. Before the lease could be granted under the Mining on Private Property Act the Minister, through his inspector, must be satisfied that the property contained gold, the mere presence of quartz not being sufficient; and if the inspector were not convinced of the suitability of the property for mining, no lease was granted; therefore no one could blackmail the owners of such land. The clause he had suggested might be put in order by the parliamentary draftsman.

On motion by MR. MORGANS, progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

MOTION—RAILWAY ADMINISTRATION.

Debate resumed from previous sitting, on motion by Mr. Holmes, "That, in the opinion of this House, the present administration of the Railway Department is unsatisfactory."

MR. RASON (South Murchison) : I am quite ready to believe that the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) was actuated by the best motives in submitting the motion now before the House. Perhaps, if some other member of the House had obtained the information which the member for East Fremantle obtained he might have thought it wise in the first place to have gone to the Minister and laid the charges before him and have said "Unless I receive a satisfactory explanation of these charges I shall feel it my duty to introduce such a motion as that now before the House." Perhaps some hon. members of the House would have adopted that course; however, the hon. member has brought forward his motion, which is practically a charge against the present Commissioner of Railways. I think every fair minded man will recognise the fact that the Commissioner of Railways also discharges the duties of Director of Public Works; he fulfils two offices, either of which entails quite as much work as we can reasonably expect any one man to perform. By way of comparison I would like to draw attention to the remuneration which the Commissioner of Railways receives. The hon. gentleman receives £1,000 a year as salary, and unlimited abuse. The administrative head of the railways of which I had experience in England, had by no means so much work as the Commissioner of Railways of this colony to do, and he received £4,000 a year. That officer had by no means so much work or so much responsibility as the Minister has, for over him was a board of directors, and under him were at least a score of officials receiving a higher salary than does the Commissioner of Railways, therefore I think everyone will admit the present Commissioner of Railways has done his utmost to discharge the duties of his dual office. Even if the charges were true every fair minded man would admit that there was a great deal of excuse for the Commissioner of Railways. These charges have to my mind certainly not been proved; the charges, such as they were, have in a majority of cases been satisfactorily explained, and I think the explanations on the whole of the charges will be quite sufficient to persuade every member of the House not to vote for such a motion as that before us. I purpose

briefly to go through the charges as submitted to the House. The first one is in connection with the purchase of some trucks from the Seabrook Battery Company. These trucks were purchased at £90 each, and much was made of the fact by hon. members opposite who have spoken about the valuation by an officer of the Railway Department, that the valuation of the trucks was only £40 each. Very much was made of that one fact, and undoubtedly it was a fact, but nothing whatever was said about the order of the different valuations which were made, nor was anything said about the original cost of the trucks being £160 each. I should like to point out that the first valuation was made on the 24th November, 1897, and that valuation was £80 per truck. On the 25th April, 1898, another valuation was made, and that valuation—valuing the trucks as constructed iron work—was £120 each. Now we come to the valuation of £40 each; on the 3rd May, 1899, another valuation was made, and it was based on a comparison between these trucks and the ordinary high sided wagons, not the value of the trucks taking into consideration the special work for which they were constructed and which perhaps they were fully able to carry out, but comparing them to the cost of ordinary high-sided wagons, and the valuation to the department was £40. The valuation of these trucks for the purpose for which they were constructed, and there is use for such trucks on the Government railways, was £120 each, while the original cost was £160. Therefore the fact that these trucks were purchased for £90 each is no proof of any neglect or carelessness on the part of the railway authorities. The next charge against the Commissioner of Railways was in connection with the adjustment of certain accounts. In the explanation of these charges the Commissioner of Railways pointed out that the hon. member had gone a very long way back, and that the circumstances on which the charges were based occurred prior to the present Commissioner taking office. Anyone, situated as the Commissioner is, will admit that that was the very least the hon. gentleman could have said. He did not attempt to throw the blame on anyone, but he said the circumstances arose prior to his taking office; and in return the Commissioner

has been accused by a member opposite of trying to shift the blame on to someone else. I think the remark was very unfair. What do we find in connection with the adjustment of these accounts? The first was in connection with Wilkie Brothers, in regard to the Southern Cross contract, and I think the Commissioner's explanation on that point should be accepted as satisfactory by every member; I do not think anyone will argue that the explanation of that point was not perfectly satisfactory. With regard to Mr. Hedges' account, that is, as we have been told, still under consideration. The next charge was as to Millar Brothers' contract, a considerable amount of money having been written off in connection with that account; I think that also has been satisfactorily explained. Then we come to the shortage of sleepers on Baxter and Prince's account, and, although at the first blush, the loss of over 8,000 sleepers in transit might appear a very serious loss, and an instance of great neglect, we must bear in mind that 300,000 sleepers were carried for Baxter and Prince, and even if over 8,000 of these sleepers were lost on transit I have no hesitation in saying, speaking from a railway experience, that it would be, by no means, an unusual occurrence on the best railways in the world. I have no hesitation in saying that, and, if necessary, I can prove similar losses, and even greater losses, on admittedly the best managed railways in the world.

MR. HOLMES: The railway you were connected with?

MR. RASON: Yes, that is one of them. I am afraid the hon. member knows very little about railways. If he had known a little bit more he would certainly never have tabled such a motion as that before the House. Anyone with the slightest practical knowledge of railway work or management would never have tabled a motion charging the Commissioner of Railways with bad administration on such paltry grounds as a few claims as to loss of goods in transit. The loss of these sleepers was undoubtedly explained by the fact that at the time the loss occurred there was an altogether unlooked for rush of traffic on the railways. Things were all higgeldy-piggeldy, through no fault of the management, and there was a rush of traffic which had

to be provided for somehow; there was a shortness of wagons and a shortness in the staff, and an uneducated staff, raw men, totally unused to railway work of any kind, and undoubtedly an error was made in signing for more sleepers than were actually received. Even if all the money concerned in the adjustment of the accounts, and all the money in the settlement of these claims, was a total loss, supposing for a moment the whole of that money represented an absolute loss to the Treasury, it would mean simply this: stretched over a period of three years the total loss was about £6,000; stretched over a period of three years the department had traffic earning a revenue of £3,000,000, therefore if the whole of the money represented a total loss, which is by no means the case, the proportion of loss would be £6,000 to £3,000,000.

MR. HOLMES: I only gave a few cases.

MR. RASON: Knowing what I do of the hon. member and his energy in this direction, I do not think he overlooked any items that were available, and I can well imagine that he brought forward every charge he could obtain.

THE PREMIER: That was any good.

MR. RASON: Either bad or good. I would point out that during these three years not only did the Railway Department earn £3,000,000, but after paying all expenses and all claims of every description the railways earned a profit of £840,000 odd. The leader of the Opposition said that the fact of any one of these charges being proved would be quite sufficient to justify driving the present Commissioner of Railways from office. I can imagine the feelings of the leader of the Opposition when some day or other he leads a Ministry in this House, and someone sitting in opposition reminds him of the fact that his Commissioner has lost, say, £20 worth of goods in transit, and this, according to his own *ipse dixit*, is sufficient to drive his Commissioner out of office. We have it that during the last financial year the claims for goods lost in transit and damaged on the Government railways of this colony amount to £447 6s. 11d.

MR. HOLMES: I will tell you something about that directly.

MR. RASON: I have no hesitation in saying that if that amount was trebled—

and this is brought as an illustration of bad management—if the amount were trebled, the loss would be justified even then. It by no means shows bad management; on the contrary it could be held up as an example of railway management which would compare favourably with any railway management in the world, considering the traffic, and the proportion of loss, and the conditions under which the traffic is dealt with. I have no hesitation in saying—and the figures in connection with other companies throughout the world will prove what I am saying—the figures will compare favourably with the best managed railways in the world.

MR. HOLMES: If the Railway Department lost a grindstone and they happened to have a cheese in stock they would give it in exchange.

MR. RASON: The hon. member instanced a few of the claims, and there was a general feeling of surprise by members opposite in reference to a chaffcutter, when the hon. member said £140 had been paid for it. There were cries of "What! so much for a chaffcutter?" But the hon. member did not explain, as he might have done, that it was a travelling steam chaffcutter.

MR. HOLMES: I did not know what it was.

MR. RASON: The hon. member evidently knows sometimes, and at other times it is not convenient to know. I happen to know something about that chaffcutter, and I know the settlement which the railway authorities made for the chaffcutter was certainly an instance of excellent management. I have no hesitation in saying that if the owners of that chaffcutter had been dealing with a private firm, instead of the Government Railway Department, that private firm would have had to pay more than the railway authorities paid for that chaffcutter. The hon. member went on to say that the railways as extended year after year were gradually paying less, and that as time went on and the railways were further extended, the result would be a greater loss in working the railways of this colony. I hope I am not misrepresenting what the hon. member said; and I believe the member for Central Murchison applauded that statement.

THE PREMIER: He generally does.

MR. RASON: But the statement is not borne out by fact, is not borne out by experience in the working of our railways. The gross earnings of the railways in Western Australia for 1897 were £915,483; for 1898 they were £1,019,677; for 1899 they were £1,018,300; so that there is actually no proof that as railway extension has increased, the revenue from railways has decreased. On the contrary, there is proof that the revenue has increased, and the profit has increased in a still greater ratio, the net profit year by year has become greater; and is that an evidence of bad management? Does it not rather point to the fact that there is good management?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But the Auditor General did not say so.

MR. RASON: If the hon. member disputes it, I will prove my assertion by figures. The profit per mile, and the total net profit in 1899, were greater than the profit in 1898. The hon. member who made these charges knows so little about railway work that he imagines that because the gross earnings last year were £1,377 less than the year before, therefore the profit must be less also. The gross earnings were that much less, but the net profit was £35,820 more. This is a clear proof of excellent management on the part of the Commissioner of Railways, and is the best proof that could possibly be afforded to reasonable men. The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) also referred to interlocking and the machinery required for it, as a waste of money on the introduction of the system; but the hon. member was treading on very dangerous ground. His leader, the member for Albany, had discretion enough to leave the interlocking severely alone; and had the member for East Fremantle exercised the same discretion, he also would have adopted that course, for anyone who is acquainted with the working of railways will tell him that the interlocking system of this colony is the admiration of all persons who have seen it and know anything about the subject; and the interlocking engineer who is employed by the Government of this colony is undoubtedly one of the most practical and one of the best men of his class that could possibly be procured.

MR. HOLMES: What has that to do with it?

MR. RASON: It has a great deal to do with the case. The work done under his supervision could not be better done anywhere, or at less cost. The assertion I am combating is that the work was not efficiently done, and that it cost a great deal more than it ought to cost.

MR. MORGANS: The hon. member made a mistake of £4,000, you know.

MR. RASON: He is not particular to a few thousand pounds. A further charge is made as to the auditing of the railway accounts, and it was alleged to be a monstrous thing that the auditing of the railway accounts in this colony was not actually done by the Auditor General's department. It was hinted also that the railway accounts were not audited by the Auditor General at all; but that is not the fact. The accounts of the chief accountant of railways are audited by the Auditor General, but the branch accounts, the station accounts, are audited by special railway auditors employed by the department. That is the usual procedure elsewhere, and is on all-fours with the course followed in England. There is in England what is known as the Railway Clearing House, and it performs there the duties which are performed in regard to the railway accounts by the Auditor General in this colony. The railway accounts there are sent to the Railway Clearing House in London, while at the same time each railway has its own auditors, who audit the accounts of the railway department, and audit all the station accounts.

MR. HOLMES: Who is responsible for losses incurred here: the Auditor General's officer or the railway officer?

MR. RASON: I have nothing to do with that. I think the Commissioner of Railways has answered that charge.

MR. LEAKE: When you have done reading your speech.

MR. RASON: I could not help hearing that remark by the member for Albany, and it is an example of the kind of fair-play he shows to other members.

MR. LEAKE: What I really observed was that the hon. member seemed to be reading the speech which the Commissioner had delivered last night. There is nothing fresh in the hon. member's remarks.

MR. RASON: I beg the hon. member's pardon; but the hon. member certainly did say, "When you have finished read-

ing your speech." However, the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) has brought certain charges of mismanagement against the Commissioner of Railways; and speaking as I do as one having had some little experience of the manner in which railway work is done, I say that anyone who has had any railway experience will admit that the management of the Government railways in this colony will compare favourably with the management of any railway in the world. I am not prepared to argue that the management here is perfect: it would be too much to expect that it should be perfect; but you must bear in mind that the management have had great difficulties to contend with, and probably more difficulties than fall to the lot of managers of any railway of the same size within the same time. Everyone will admit that the present Commissioner of Railways has striven loyally and manfully to do a very difficult work, and the wonder is that he has been able to do so much, and been able to do that much so well.

THE PREMIER: hear, hear.

[A pause ensued, and the SPEAKER again stated the question.]

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): I had hoped that my friend the member for Canning (Mr. Wilson) would have said something.

MR. WILSON: Waiting for you.

THE PREMIER: You are the attackers.

MR. MORGANS: I noticed that my friend opposite was preparing a speech, for I observed the member for East Fremantle passing notes to him, and so I thought I should have the pleasure of listening to a speech from the hon. member in reply to the speech of the Commissioner of Railways before I had occasion to rise. I am disappointed, as the hon. member has compelled me to speak first. Much as I regret to take precedence of him, I feel it my duty on this occasion to take advantage of this opportunity of saying a few words in reference to the motion. I observed last night, much to my regret, and I felt a certain amount of sorrow on behalf of my friend the member for Albany, that he got up and attempted to make a defence of the member for East Fremantle. I am quite sure the member for Albany never had a more difficult task to perform in this House, and I am sure

also that much as the hon. member's ability always tends in the direction of proving a case to his own satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the House, even if he wants to show that black is white, yet in his speech last night I am sorry to say the hon. member was not so successful as I should have wished him to be. I regret, on his behalf, that he had not a better cause to advocate; but I may say that I admired the gallant attempt he made, and I regret the failure that resulted. I will refer now to what the member for East Fremantle said with regard to the administration of the railways. I had not the pleasure of listening to the hon. member's speech when he delivered it in this House, but I have taken the opportunity of reading it since in *Hansard*, and I observe that he opened his speech by saying that he realised the sense of his responsibility. Looking at the grave charges he made against the Commissioner of Railways and against the high officials of that department, I may say that I do not think he fully realised the responsibility he undertook. Perhaps if I had listened to his speech, and perhaps if I had not had an opportunity of listening to the reply of the Commissioner of Railways, I might have admitted that he had spoken with some sense of responsibility; but after having read his speech as reported, and after hearing the speech of the Commissioner of Railways, I am bound to say that, in my opinion, the hon. member was lost to all sense of responsibility in the charges he brought against the railway department. In attacking it the hon. member said he hoped to justify his charges. Well, there may be some satisfaction in bringing charges that are made against an important body of men in the country like this; but I hope that when the hon. member spoke of his desire to justify these charges, he did not speak in the sense that it was a pleasure to him to have the opportunity of justifying the serious charges against those gentlemen. I do not think he meant that, but if he did not he might have expressed his meanings in other words that would not convey such a sense to the minds of hon. members. He said further that he had had the honour and the pleasure of knowing the Commissioner of Railways for a great

number of years before the Commissioner held that high position, and before he (Mr. Holmes) had any thought of becoming a member of this House; and when we look at this statement in conjunction with the other statement going before it, that the hon. member hoped to justify himself in bringing these charges, I want to ask, and would like to impress on the hon. member and on others, what would his feelings be, supposing he had proved these charges against his friend the Commissioner of Railways? What would the proof of these charges have meant to the Commissioner of Railways? It would have meant his absolute ruin as a public man in this colony; it would have meant that he was absolutely unfitted to occupy the high, honourable, and responsible position that he now occupies; and in point of fact it would have gone further than that, and would have made it absolutely necessary that the Minister should retire from the position he holds. I think if I had a friend, notwithstanding the dictates and the demands of public duty, I should have considered carefully and well before bringing these charges in this House and before this country; I think I should have considered well what were the foundations of these charges; and I think that such a course is the duty of any member of Parliament, whether he be a friend or an enemy of the person against whom he intends to make charges. But when an hon. member brings serious charges against a high Government official, when he attempts to prove that there has been maladministration in the affairs of the department which that official controls, and at the same time professes to be a friend of that official, and claims—

MR. HOLMES: Public duty comes first.

MR. MORGANS: I think he should hesitate before bringing such serious charges against that officer.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member is no "friend." We need not trouble about him.

MR. MORGANS: I am coming now to duty. There is a charm in this idea of doing one's duty to the public, and I admire the courageous way in which the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) has attempted to do his duty.

MR. HOLMES: You are doing yours now.

MR. MORGANS: But I must say there is always a danger that a person in a parliamentary position, in circumstances such as those by which we are surrounded, may do his duty with a too full conscience. I do not conceive, as a man of the world, that anyone is called upon to perform the duty of misrepresenting his fellow man. That is not a duty. Although I do not accuse the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) of having wilfully misrepresented the Commissioner of Railways and all that splendid body of men under the Commissioner's control, though I do not say he has wilfully done that, I am bound to say that in bringing before this House the serious charges he laid at the door of my friend the Commissioner, under the guise of doing a public duty, the hon. member has committed a gross injustice towards the Commissioner and his subordinates of the Railway Department, as has been proved by the answer of the Minister of Railways. What more perfect answer could have been given to the charges made by the hon. member than the Commissioner's reply last night? I am bound to say, as a man of the world and as a man of business, that I consider the member for East Fremantle was absolutely annihilated.

MR. KINGSMILL: Why, the Commissioner pleaded guilty.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And admitted everything.

MR. MORGANS: The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) was annihilated; and that was the reason—

MR. HOLMES: You cannot read.

MR. MORGANS: I heard the speech: it is not necessary to read it. And that is the reason why the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) found it absolutely impossible to raise a reasonable defence on behalf of his colleague last night. The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) said he would not flinch from his duty. Well, he is a brave man. Brave men do not flinch from their duty, and I congratulate the hon. member on his bravery. He said, "I will stand true to my guns." He said, "I will cast these accusations broadcast, whether they be right or wrong, against the Commissioner of Railways, and will try to damn the career of these high officials of the Railway Department, and I will not flinch from my duty."

MR. LEAKE: Oh, do not bring tears to your eyes.

MR. MORGANS: That is carrying out a duty, and that is standing without flinching!

MR. LEAKE: Tell us something about the railways.

MR. MORGANS: Here is the hon. member who tells us he will not flinch from this great duty he has to perform, and whose charges have been shown by the reply of the Commissioner of Railways to have absolutely no foundation whatever. The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) further suggested that there may be some political move in this matter. I do not know exactly what he meant by that as regards the Commissioner of Railways; and I can only conceive that there might have been some political move on behalf of the hon. member himself.

MR. HOLMES: I never said anything about a political move.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes, you did.

MR. MORGANS: Well, if I could quote from *Hansard*, which I cannot do, I could point out that you did say so. The hon. member suggested that there might be some political reason for what he called the maladministration in the Railway Department. I cannot see any political reason for the action of the Commissioner of Railways; but I am bound to say that I can see political motives on the part of hon. members opposite; and I am going to explain one of the great objects of the hon. member (Mr. Holmes), who, I suppose, consulted with his chief (Mr. Leake) with regard to this motion. I know that to several members of the Opposition in the House the nature of this motion was a mystery. Incidentally, without any intention whatever of seeking for information, because that is not my way of doing things—

MR. LEAKE: Oh, we know what you mean.

MR. JAMES: That is a nasty way of putting it.

MR. MORGANS: Incidentally, I had a conversation with one or two members of this House, and the object or rather the subject of this motion was to them a mystery. Nobody seemed to know what it was going to be, and at that time it appeared on the face of it to be rather like that mine of gun-cotton over which

the Boers walked in the Transvaal, with the result that some 1,500 of them were blown up. That was the impression made on my mind at the time, that here were this unfortunate Commissioner of Railways and this unfortunate Government holding the reins of power at the present time—

MR. KINGSMILL: Are they like the Boers?

MR. MORGANS: And here was the member for East Fremantle about to explode a mine under these unfortunate gentlemen. Nobody seemed to know what the motion was; and I began to wonder whether the hon. member had found out something which had escaped the attention of the Commissioner of Railways with regard to railway administration; I began to wonder whether the hon. member had really unearthed something that might be serious, and I am bound to say I felt a little natural anxiety about the matter. However, I came into the House with some confidence, because I spoke to the Commissioner of Railways, and he told me there was absolutely nothing to fear, that this department is worked on honourable and straightforward lines. He said, "There is nothing to conceal, and I can assure you that, as regards the hon. member's motion, I am quite prepared to meet it: it is impossible for him to say anything to which I cannot satisfactorily reply." That gave me confidence, and I came into the House (although I might have been prepared at one time to hear some terrible disaster with regard to the Government), knowing that the Commissioner of Railways would answer all the charges brought against him. But when I came to read through the charges of the hon. member, as reported in *Hansard*, that was the time I began to see through the weakness of his case; and when I heard the Commissioner's speech last night, I was convinced that all those charges had been annihilated. There may have been a political move in this—I do not say there has, or that there has not, but I do know that in politics advantage is frequently taken of these circumstances for the purpose of shaking a Government. Whether or not the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) took advantage of this opportunity, with a view of throwing a few bombshells into the camp of the Government, is not

for me to say, nor does it matter very much; but, at all events, I think the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) would not have brought in his motion without the permission of the leader of the Opposition, because it does practically amount to a vote of censure upon the Government, and if not upon the Government, it practically amounts to a vote of censure upon the Commissioner; and therefore, knowing the member for Albany, how well he has his forces in train, how well he controls them, how well he directs them in all their operations, I am perfectly certain he would not have permitted the member for East Fremantle to have brought in this motion unless he had known all about it, and had given his consent to the project. Then the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) went on to say he would not accept a denial. What does the hon. member mean?

MR. JAMES: Do not ask conundrums.

MR. MORGANS: But if it is a conundrum, I should like to know what the answer is. The hon. member said in his speech that he would not accept a denial. What does he mean? If he would be good enough to explain to me, I should be glad, because it would clear my mind of a cloud, a dark spot, which is resting on it at the present moment. If the hon. member would be good enough to explain, I should be obliged, what he meant when he said he would not accept a denial. I do not know his meaning. The hon. member made one very significant remark, and one which impressed itself upon my mind. He said, "It has taken me a long time to collect this information." What does that mean? Does it mean that the hon. member has been acting in the Railway Department as a detective, when he has been a long time in collecting this information? And he said he had experienced great difficulty in obtaining this information. Well now, how long did the hon. member take to get this information?

MR. HOLMES: I do not think you are quoting me correctly.

MR. A. FORREST: Quite correctly.

MR. MORGANS: I think I am quoting quite correctly. I should like to ask the member for East Fremantle how long it has taken him to collect this information? How many months has he been preparing

this mine with which to burst up the Forrest Ministry? And after asking him that, I should like to ask him certain other questions.

MR. LEAKE: You must address the Chair, not the hon. member.

MR. MORGANS: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. member: how long has he been collecting this information, how long has he been laying this mine to burst up the Forrest Government; and to ask him further one much more interesting question, namely: who are his accomplices? I should like to ask, who are the traitors in the Railway Department who have given the hon. member this information? I should like to ask, who are the men in the public service whose help has been sought by the hon. member for the purpose of bringing these charges against the Commissioner of Railways? Who are these traitors? I think this House has a right to demand from the hon. member a reply to that question. It is quite clear that when any man brings a charge against another, whether it be in Parliament or out of Parliament, it is in accordance with all laws governing British subjects and the British race that no charge should be brought against any man unless that charge is attempted to be substantiated, and the accuser be confronted with the accused.

MR. HOLMES: I am the accuser.

MR. MORGANS: Yes, you are the accuser; but your accusation is based upon information obtained from the department by renegades and traitors; and now I shall ask whether the hon. member is prepared to act in the same spirit of British fair-play. I shall ask him to state to this House who were these men who gave him this information; who are these men who have "pulled his leg" so successfully, and who are these men who have so successfully hoodwinked him? I should like, Mr. Speaker, an answer to be given in this House to those questions; and I think every hon. member has a perfect right to know the names of those traitors who have assisted the hon. member in bringing these unfounded charges against the Commissioner and against the railway officials of this colony.

MR. JAMES: You call them "traitors" before you know who they are.

MR. MORGANS: They are undoubtedly traitors.

MR. LEAKE: What about the Auditor General's report?

MR. MORGANS: I am coming to the Auditor General's report. My statement is, and I base this statement upon the statement of the member for East Fremantle, that he was a long time in collecting this information; and I ask, how could he get this information? Evidently he could get it only from one source, and that was through some men inside the railway department.

MR. HOLMES: Then the information was correct?

MR. MORGANS: No; I absolutely deny its correctness, or, rather, I deny the light in which you have placed it; and I say the hon. member, in order to get this information, has been obliged to make traitors of some men in the railway department, and has been obliged to make some men in the department dishonourable and disloyal.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why?

MR. MORGANS: Because such men must have given information outside of the department which they had no right to give. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] And I say that in doing this the hon. member has done a great wrong to the public service of the colony of Western Australia.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. MORGANS: With regard to the purchase of these trucks, we know perfectly well that a clever lawyer like the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), as I said before, can make black look white. I cannot do that. If I could I should make a much more effective reply to-night.

MR. JAMES: You can make it much blacker.

MR. MORGANS: I do say with regard to the purchase of these trucks, and the member for Albany harped upon this string, that the locomotive engineer of railways had valued these trucks at £40 each. True, the engineer did value them at £40; but the same engineer also said these trucks were worth £120 each.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Which estimate was right?

MORGANS: They were worth £40 to the department.

MR. HOLMES: Is that one of the officers you are speaking of?

MR. MORGANS: Any man who knows anything about the value of rolling-stock—I do not know whether the member for East Fremantle does—would know that a truck must be practically useless if it is not worth £40; and it has been shown by the Commissioner that these trucks were valued by the locomotive engineer at £120, though that officer afterwards said they would be worth £40 to the department. What does that mean? It simply means that the mechanical engineer knew perfectly well that the Mines and Water Trust Company, from whom the wagons were bought, were in financial difficulties and were winding up their business, and that this unfortunate company owed a sum of money to the department; and on that knowledge the engineer said, "Well, there will be a good chance to get these trucks for one-half or one-third of their value."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is that the value to the department?

MR. MORGANS: Yes; that is the value.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not to the department.

MR. MORGANS: The engineer stated they were worth £120, and I go on that statement, and it is quite easy to explain how it was the mechanical engineer said they were worth £40 to the department. He went on to do as many members in this House have done in similar circumstances, namely, to take advantage of the financial position of the Water Trust Company to get the trucks very cheaply.

MR. JAMES: That makes the market value; not the value to the buyer.

MR. MORGANS: That does not alter the fact that the department got their money's worth, and that is my point. The department were in a strong position in regard to this transaction, seeing that the Water Trust Company owed the department the sum of over £3,000, and the department were in a strong position to "put the screw on" the unfortunate company in regard to the trucks. I venture to say, looking at the fact that these trucks cost the Water Trust Company £160 each, as it has been shown they did, the "screw" was put on to the company, even in buying the trucks at £90.

MR. HOLMES: Have you seen the trucks?

MR. MORGANS: No; I have not.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The wheels and axles alone are worth the money.

MR. MORGANS: I know the trucks must have been worth more than £40, because I have bought trucks myself. At any rate, there must be no doubt in the mind of any reasonable man who does not desire to be unfair from political or other motives, that the department has made no error in the purchase of the trucks. There is another circumstance in connection with this case. At the time these trucks were purchased, the department were in great want of rolling stock, and were prepared to put up with any inconvenience in order to cope with the traffic.

MR. HOLMES: The department have never used the trucks yet.

MR. MORGANS: If the trucks have not been used, they have been put in proper order.

MR. HOLMES: When?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The trucks were in use before the alterations, and have been in use since.

MR. JAMES: Why alter them, then?

MR. MORGANS: The facts show how the member for East Fremantle is prepared to exaggerate in order to prove his case, and he is unfair when he says the trucks have not been used.

MR. HOLMES: How many of them have been used?

MR. MORGANS: I can only say the hon. member stands convicted of misrepresentation, on his own words in this House.

THE PREMIER: Not for the first time.

MR. MORGANS: I do not wish to go on with the subject of the trucks, because I think sufficient has been said. It gives me pleasure to know that the debate in the House has at least enlightened the public as to the true facts of the case. The public can now see the object the member for East Fremantle has in view in bringing this motion forward; and if there was no other case than that of these trucks, his plan has been exposed, not only to the House but to the country.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. HOLMES: What plan?

MR. MORGANS: I will tell the member for East Fremantle many unpleasant things before I sit down.

MR. HOLMES: You had better make a start.

MR. MORGANS: The hon. member said he had been called a "mining expert," and also that he had been called a "financier," and a "railway expert;" but it has been forgotten to call him a "railway engineer." Do we not remember that in this House a short time ago, the hon. member actually questioned the plans made by the Chief Engineer for the bridge at Fremantle? Do we not remember when he told us the Chief Engineer was wrong?

MR. HOLMES: So he was.

MR. MORGANS: Do we not remember how he told us that the stays were placed in wrongly, and that the curves of the bridge were not right? Really, I do not know in what the hon. member is not an expert.

MR. HOLMES: He is not a mining expert.

MR. MORGANS: No; he is not, and I am quite sure he does not understand railways. I would like to add to the acquirements and attainments of the hon. member, the qualities of a civil engineer for the construction of bridges. That I think should be added to the titles he has the honour of possessing.

MR. HOLMES: Thanks!

MR. MORGANS: Now we come to the case of Wilkie Brothers, though it is hardly worth while explaining that case.

MR. HOLMES: We will admit that, in order to get the business along.

MR. MORGANS: The Chief Commissioner of Railways has completely exploded the position taken up by the member for East Fremantle; but the hon. member stated, though I do not suppose he did so wilfully, that a certain account had been wiped out as between the Government and Wilkie Brothers. The account is not wiped out or anything of the kind: it was simply a question of adjustment of accounts, which occurred because the Government had agreed to supply trucks to Wilkie Brothers at ten shillings a piece, and had also hired trucks for ballast purposes at four shillings each.

MR. HOLMES: I will admit that, in order to get the business along.

MR. MORGANS: Then the hon. member admits he is wrong.

MR. HOLMES: Not at all.

MR. MORGANS: If the hon. member does not admit he is wrong, I will go on explaining.

MR. JAMES: This is simply a Ministerial echo.

MR. HOLMES: I will accept the statement, in order to get along with the business.

MR. MORGANS: The hon. member will accept the statement.

MR. HOLMES: Yes; in order to get along with the business.

MR. MORGANS: The hon. member does not like fingers on sore places.

MR. JAMES: It is all "humour," so far.

MR. MORGANS: It is perfectly clear there was absolutely nothing wrong in connection with this account. The whole business was clear and straightforward, and simply an adjustment, which proves the zeal of the railway authorities to exact more from Wilkie Brothers than ought to have been paid.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was not clear before the explanation.

MR. MORGANS: It was perfectly clear, and it would have been made so if the member for East Fremantle had taken the right course to obtain the information. The way in which this case was put by the member for East Fremantle was absolutely unjust and incorrect; and the only possible result that can follow from the explanation is a misunderstanding, both inside and outside the House, as to the true position of affairs; and therefore the hon. member not only did an injustice to the Government, but tried to mislead members and the public.

MR. HOLMES: I ask whether my charge is just or unjust.

MR. MORGANS: At any rate I am glad to say that discussion will clear up the mystery.

MR. LEAKE: It took eighteen months to do it.

MR. MORGANS: I can only say the member for East Fremantle is in the wrong. He made some reference to Mr. Hedges' account, but that case is perfectly clear. Mr. Hedges built a railway for the Government.

MR. HOLMES: When?

MR. MORGANS: Some time ago.

MR. HOLMES: How many years ago.

MR. MORGANS: It may have been 25 years ago: time does not affect the

point, and the hon. member should not be so impatient. The railway was built by Mr. Hedges, and he presented an account which he thought legitimate and just. But the Government had certain claims against Mr. Hedges for hire of trucks and various other matters. There is a ledger account in which the Government appear as owing Hedges so much, though I believe the Government do not admit a large liability. Hedges in his ledger has the Government down as owing him so much, and himself as owing the Government so much; so that it is simply a matter of adjustment of accounts. There is no difficulty in regard to the payment, and therefore absolutely no reason for bringing the question before the House; and certainly there is no information to be gained from anything the member for East Fremantle says. He did refer at various times to the uselessness of the Bridgetown railway; but that matter has been discussed in the House so many times, and hon. members have talked so much claptrap about it, that it really was not necessary to bring the matter up again.

MR. HOLMES: I never said anything about that railway.

MR. MORGANS: I am not speaking of the hon. member now, but of various members who have said what a terrible blunder it was to build this railway. It so happened, however—whether through good fortune or good judgment, it matters not—that this is a useful railway, and is opening up one of the most valuable parts of Western Australia, and is proving a great boon to the colony in the development of its resources; so that I do not think it was necessary to bring the subject into the debate at all. When the member for East Fremantle was addressing the House, I noticed an interjection by the member for West Kimberley, who asked the same question I have asked, namely "Who is your informer?" But the member for East Fremantle was dumb, and is dumb to-night. Why does he not answer the question? I hope we may look forward to get some satisfaction from his reply on this debate; but why does he not give the names of those people who supplied him with information? Why did he not do so when the Commissioner asked him? I act on the lines of British fair-play,

and say that when an accusation is brought forward, we ought to know who is the accuser. If a man accuses me, I at once want to know who that man is. I now appeal to the British instincts of the hon. member to let this House and the public know who his informants are, in order that they may be aware who the traitors are in the different departments of this colony.

A MEMBER: And you would dismiss them.

MR. MORGANS: Yes; I would dismiss them as quickly as I could sign the papers. I do not want to go into this question of Millar Brothers, which has been so fully explained.

MR. HOLMES: It was not explained.

MR. MORGANS: Then I will explain it. It is not a question of freights at all, but simply a question of the hire of trucks. The Government exchanged trucks with Millar Brothers, who had so many running upon the Government lines at times, and the Government had trucks running upon Millar Brothers' section. It is, I repeat, entirely a matter of adjustment as to the hire of trucks, and has nothing to do with freights. It is an adjustment of the account by Millar Brothers with regard to the interchange and the working of these trucks, and that was the amount Millar Brothers had a right to claim from the Government for the service in relation to these trucks.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Where did you get the accounts?

MR. MORGANS: This information can be obtained, if you apply to the Railway Department for it and not this House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And you would discharge a man for giving it.

MR. MORGANS: If the public want any information with regard to the actions of the Government or the administration of the railways or anything else, all they have to do is to go to the respective departments, where they will be treated with the greatest courtesy and receive that information. They have no business to intervene in these matters at all in this House. If they want to get the information, let them apply to the departments to which these transactions refer; and if they find any difficulty in securing the information they require, then will be the time to bring the matter

before this House, and they will be entitled to get the information through the Minister.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You want to discharge this man.

MR. MORGANS: I do not. I want to discharge any man who gives any information except through the proper channel, and that is the Minister. With regard to the loss of these sleepers, the hon. member made a great bullabalo about it, and he absolutely misrepresented the Government. He said—and this is the impression the public would receive from his statement—that the Government had passed 20,000 sleepers to Baxter and Prince, and had lost 8,500. That is an absolute misrepresentation. The facts are these: the Government passed 300,000 sleepers over the lines to Baxter and Prince, and out of that number 8,500 were lost. That is a very different position from losing 8,500 out of 20,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Minister said he did not lose them.

MR. MORGANS: I am willing to accept the Minister's statement, and say they went astray. I am going to tell the hon. member where these sleepers are. I know where they are. I repeat that the assertion was an absolute misrepresentation of the facts, and the misrepresentation was not only made in this House but went forth to the country through the Press. If the hon. member desired to be fair to the Commissioner of Railways and to place the facts fairly before the House and the country, he should have said the Government carried 300,000 sleepers for Baxter and Prince, and out of that number they lost 8,500: that would have put the thing fairly before the country and the House; but he did not do so. Why? Because there was an apparent desire on his part to misrepresent the Commissioner of Railways and the high officials working under his command and authority. I do not think that is fair. In my opinion it is not right to attack public officials in that way in this House, and I think that not only will members in the House disapprove of actions of this kind, but I am sure such actions will be disapproved by the country. Those sleepers, I believe, are now on the Kalgoorlie railway, and they are very good sleepers. Some of them

are between Bulla Bulling and Kalgoorlie, others I believe are in the station yard at Coolgardie, and probably the whole 8,500 are somewhere between Southern Cross and Bulla Bulling. No one can blame the Government for this, nor can they blame the administration in any way for it, because the Chief Commissioner cannot label every truck that goes out of the station yard at Fremantle, Bridgetown, or Midland Junction. He has to rely upon the railway employees, and if they made mistakes with regard to the transit of these sleepers, it is not his fault. It is quite true there were 70 truck loads, but it is easy to understand that out of 300,000 sleepers 8,500 may go astray; two or three to-day, five or six to-morrow, eight or ten next week. It is, I repeat, quite easy to understand how they could go astray; but how can you blame the Commissioner of Railways or the high officials, because some of the porters at various stations made a mistake and sent sleepers to the wrong place? It is perfectly absurd to bring a charge of this kind. No reasonable man in the House or in the colony would attempt to put any blame on the high officials of the Railway Department for this.

MR. HOLMES: It was the other fellow to blame.

MR. MORGANS: Take the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes). We all know him to be an acute, shrewd man of business. I think there is no man in the House who knows how to manage his business affairs with more alacrity and despatch, and who knows the way to look better after number one than does the hon. member for East Fremantle. We know that from the discussion that took place on the tick question, in which he said he had appropriated the profit out of the reduction of duties which took place, that instead of allowing the consumers to get the benefit of that reduction, he put the money in his own pocket.

THE PREMIER: He wanted the other half, too.

MR. MORGANS: We know perfectly well he knows how to look after himself. What happened to this shrewd man of business? I remember seeing in the papers not long ago that one of his employees had actually been prosecuted for stealing money from him. Would any member of the House accuse the

member for East Fremantle of being an obtuse man of business, just because one of his men robbed him and he had to send the man to gaol? Certainly not. It would be as unreasonable as attempting to accuse the Commissioner of Railways because 8,500 sleepers went astray. In this world we have to rely upon other people in these matters. The Commissioner of Railways and all these high officials have to rely upon the enormous staff they have under their control, just the same as hon. members have to rely upon people in their employ, and I have to trust men in my employ. If they do wrong we regret it, but we cannot be held responsible for it; so I say with regard to these sleepers, it is quite unfair to try to put the whole of the responsibility upon the Commissioner of Railways, the Traffic Manager, and the General Manager.

MR. HOLMES: I did not think of any one.

MR. MORGANS: I know you did not, but your motion applies to the whole of the Railway Department, and it means this if it means anything, that they are unworthy of the confidence of this country, and of the trust placed in them.

MR. HOLMES: What is the Auditor General?

MR. MORGANS: I am coming to that. After all, what does that mean? What is it, the whole of it? After much labour, and a great deal of time spent among disloyal and treacherous employees, we have this result, that there is a windmill lost, value £27; £60 worth of bacon—good gracious! here is an item. A Government running a thousand miles of railways and controlling a million per annum has lost £60 worth of bacon! Clothing, £27; poultry, £148. That poultry got shunted on to a siding, and, I regret to say, I lost my Christmas dinner just one year last Christmas through the loss of that truck. That is the only item in this list that I feel anything about. All the rest I am prepared to let pass without comment, but I certainly feel inclined, under the circumstances, to rub a little blame into the Commissioner of Railways with regard to that item. Then we have oats, £50; machinery, £204; and chaff-cutter, £149. The total is £700 worth of stuff which has been lost upon

Government railways doing a trade of three millions in the time covered by these losses.

MR. HOLMES: These are examples.

MR. MORGANS: These are practically all, at any rate practically all the Government have paid for. You have a total loss of £700 worth of goods through the railway administration here, covering a period of years and a turnover of more than three millions of money; and yet you have the hon. member coming into this House and telling members that because the Government have lost £700 worth of stuff over a system 1,000 miles long, they do not deserve to hold the position they occupy, and ought to lose the confidence of the public they are serving. I will ask if any more absurd proposition could be brought before the House by any member. It is the most absurd suggestion I have ever heard of as a business man, and I am sure members of the House will agree with what I have said. I have heard business men say, "It is a wonder to me that the railways have not lost a great deal more."

A MEMBER: So they have.

MR. MORGANS: Look at the pressure placed upon them in 1896 and 1897, when goods were coming into Fremantle, brought by ship after ship, stuff being thrown out upon the wharf, and there not being one-fifth enough trucks or locomotives to convey the goods to the gold-fields. Knowing all the facts connected with the loss down at Fremantle, I say the greatest credit is due to the Chief Commissioner of Railways and the whole of his officials and the men connected with the Railway Department, for the way in which they handled that very difficult position. I will go further, and say that I doubt if there is any railway department controlled by a company or by a Government, which has ever found itself in such difficult circumstances, and found itself labouring under such difficult conditions as this Government did between 1896 and 1898. I think every hon. member will agree with that, and I am sure, instead of attempting to cast censure on the railway administration, members should extend their warmest thanks and gratitude for the administration of the railways during that period. We heard a great deal about the lost cheque; and if I had been the Commissioner of Rail-

ways I do not think I should have referred to that question. That cheque was passed into the account when the present Commissioner of Railways was not administering the railways, and I do not know what he had to do with it. I can quite understand that the hon. member must have taken a great deal of time in hunting up the particulars about this cheque, which is four or five years of age: at any rate he got the information about that unfortunate cheque, and as the transaction took place prior to the administration of the Commissioner of Railways, it was absolutely unfair and unjustifiable on the part of the hon. member to include that circumstance in his motion. It is absolutely unfair to charge the Commissioner with anything of that kind, because he had nothing to do with it. Hon. members will agree with me in that also.

MR. LEAKE: The motion applies to the department; not to the individual.

MR. MORGANS: This motion applies to the Commissioner of Railways and the administration of to-day, and I say these are circumstances over which the Commissioner of Railways had no control. The charge is absolutely unfair and unjust, and will not be indorsed by the House or the country. The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) referred to the audits. The audits on the railways here are carried out on exactly the same lines as the audits on the railways in England. It is true in England the railways are held by private companies, but the system of audit is just the same. There is an audit department, and that department is entirely independent of the administration of the railways; the traffic manager and the general manager have nothing whatever to do with the audit department.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is that so on our railways?

MR. MORGANS: It is so here; it is exactly on the same lines as all the railway audit departments in England, where the railways are privately owned.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is the same in Victoria and South Australia.

MR. LEAKE: But we have an Audit Act.

MR. MORGANS: The system is the same in the other colonies. What I say is that this system of audit is absolutely correct, for every business reason and for

every other reason, because the audit department is independent entirely of the administration of the railways: the traffic manager and the general manager have nothing whatever to do with it. If it is desired by the House that any change should be made, if it is desired by the House and the country that the Auditor General should have full control over the railways, this House must alter the Audit Act, and this House must declare that it is desirable that the system of auditing the public accounts of the colony shall be changed. You cannot blame the Commissioner of Railways for the system that is in vogue. If the House thinks it is not a desirable system, let it be altered. But until the House alters the system it must go on as now. I think it would be a great mistake indeed to place the sole control of the accounts in the hands of the Auditor General: that is not the business of the Auditor General of the colony. You might as well say that we should place the whole of the accounts of the Custom House under the direction of the Auditor General.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Are they not?

MR. MORGANS: The accounts are directly under Mr. Mason, who is responsible to the Auditor General, and the chief accountant of the Railway Department is responsible to the Auditor General also. The position is exactly the same, and I say it would be impossible to attempt to run the whole details of the railway accounts from the Audit Department. If that were the case, the railways could not be run. Therefore I have answered the remarks made by the member for Albany, and I have shown him that the Auditor General has as much control over the railway accounts as he should have. There was something said about the Auditor General which shows how one or two hon. members on the Opposition side have treated this matter. They have really been unfair to the Commissioner of Railways, and this applies especially to the member for East Fremantle. It only remains for me to say that the statement made by the member for East Fremantle, that the Auditor General had made a certain statement with regard to the Railway Department, is really untrue.

MR. HOLMES: His officer made it and he confirmed it.

MR. MORGANS: The Auditor General has not confirmed it, and his report proves that. I have his report before me, and he gives his report and signs it. The Auditor General does not, in any way, make himself responsible for the contents of the document that follows. I am sure such a shrewd man of business as the hon. member for East Fremantle must have known that, when he read the report. Here is a minute dated the 27th March, 1899, from the Auditor General to the General Manager of Railways. It has nothing to do with the Auditor General's report at all: it is simply a minute, and in it the Auditor General says:

I have the honour to forward, herewith, a special report by Mr. Audit Inspector Smyth, of even date, relative to his recent investigation into the Sidings Deposit and Other Works Account, as kept in the books of your department. I shall refrain from making any comments at this stage, preferring as I do to obtain your remarks in explanation of the several points brought under notice in the report under review.

The Auditor General actually refuses to take cognisance of the statement made by Mr. Smyth.

MR. LEAKE: Good gracious!

MR. MORGANS: Yes; absolutely refuses. Nothing can be clearer than that, to the mind of any hon. member. He says, "I refrain from making any comment at this stage." What more can a man say? Then he goes on to say, "Please give this important matter your earliest attention, and return these papers." That is perfectly clear. The Auditor General had absolutely not made up his mind at the time he wrote that. Yet the member for East Fremantle attempts to show, and states in his speech, that the Auditor General had made this statement, whereas the Auditor General had done nothing of the kind. And what is the result? It is sent out by the Press of this country, and the whole public believe that the Auditor General had made this statement with regard to the management of the railways. Now I say that is an unjustifiable and unfair position for the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) to take up, and I hope and am sure that before this debate closes, his sense of justice will induce him to rise in this House and to withdraw this very serious charge.

MR. HOLMES: I will when the Auditor General does so.

MR. MORGANS: Then the Auditor General goes on to say what in his view, and I think he is right, is the cause of this difference of opinion between the views of the Audit Department and of the Railway Department. He says:

It appears to me that the line of action adopted by the department in question—
Now this is perfectly clear—

would bear the construction that the Government railway system is being conducted on the same principle as private railways.

So it is, and you cannot have a better system; and if any Government attempt to change that system, they will make a big blunder, and will bring the railways into great difficulties, and at the same time make railway administration impossible. The Auditor General goes on to say:

But it must be borne in mind that the latter are not subject, as is the case with the former, to parliamentary control, or, in other words, they are not governed by statute law; and this to my mind is the *crux* of the whole question, which requires to be decided by Parliament for the guidance of all parties concerned.

That is a very reasonable statement to make; and it is most unjustifiable in the member for East Fremantle to come before this House and to state that the Auditor General had brought a charge against the Minister of Railways and the whole of those high officials, when the hon. member knew perfectly well that in the whole of this report no such reference is made, and when at the same time the Auditor General pointed out the difficulty that existed, that the Railway Department believed in one system of accounts and the Audit Department in another, and that it was only a matter of difference of opinion. How any hon. member could in this House attempt to attach blame to the Commissioner of Railways by reason of the Auditor General's report, or could attempt to prove that the Commissioner of Railways and the railway officials of this colony were attempting to hoodwink the public and the Audit Department, I cannot conceive. It is most unreasonable, and I think, further, that it is absolutely unfair. There have been other attempts made.—I have not time to go into them in detail to-night—there was something said about this

interlocking gear. Now we have all seen how hon. members were misled by the member for East Fremantle, who made a lot of wild statements about this interlocking gear. He said it cost £10,000. Nothing of the kind. It only cost £6,000. He said it had been sent to Kalgoorlie, whereas it was sent to Northam. He made a lot of the wildest and rashest statements conceivable with regard to this gear, for the purpose of proving that the Government had done some wrong. The Commissioner has shown us that the interlocking gear at the Perth station was not sufficiently powerful to deal with the traffic. It was required at Northam, and it was sent up there. It fitted that place. New gear was brought into the Perth station to suit the altered circumstances of the Railway Department. The other part of the gear was sent up to Kalgoorlie. Now where is the maladministration with regard to this? It may be said that this interlocking gear is unnecessary for these Government railways; but I would ask hon. members whether they would rather have interlocking gear or have a collision at the station every other day? I know, and every railway man knows from experience, that it pays any system of railways to have interlocking gear. They know perfectly well that within a year it saves all its cost in claims for compensation.

MR. LEAKE: Oh!

MR. MORGANS: Yes; and especially in Western Australia, where juries always pile up damages on the Government when they get a chance to do so; and I say, if there were no other reason than the protection of the lives of passengers in that busy station, there is good reason for the introduction of that interlocking gear.

MR. LEAKE: Where? In places like Pinjarrah?

MR. MORGANS: Yes; but I do not think they have it up there.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; they have only the signals.

MR. MORGANS: I have already taken up more time than I intended, and I would just say that I entirely disapprove, and I am perfectly sure hon. members will also entirely disapprove, of the position taken up by the member for East Fremantle in moving this motion. I am

perfectly sure the public will disapprove of it; and if the hon. member will excuse my saying so, I am sure that the introduction of these garbled statements, and these attempts to foist injustice upon the shoulders of the Commissioner of Railways and of the railway officials of this colony, which have been made by the hon. member, will have a damaging effect upon the hon. member's political career—a most serious and damaging effect.

THE PREMIER : He has got no career.

MR. MORGANS : Because, after all, we must remember that the public like fair-play; they do not like any stabbing in the dark; and above all, the British public do not believe in a traitor, nor do they believe in information given by spies. The public object to things of that sort, and I say the hon. member will find that this motion he has brought into this House will recoil upon his own shoulders, as a public man, and will seriously affect his political position at the next general election. I believe that is the view the public will take: not that it is a matter which need trouble me in any way, I am not at all anxious about it; but at the same time, as a good friend of the hon. member, and as a much older man than he, I would tell him that this is not a good way to begin a political career, and I should advise him not to take advantage of circumstances of this kind with a view of trying to damage the political position of a Minister or of any other person. It is not fair-play; it is not a right way of doing things; and I would ask the hon. member whether it is a fact that he has not applied to any of the departments for this information he has sought through those traitors and spies? Has he ever asked for this information from the departments? The hon. member is silent.

MR. HOLMES : Oh, I will reply to you, right enough.

MR. MORGANS : The hon. member is silent; and I say that, if the hon. member had gone to the Railway Department, if he had asked for this information, the department would have cleared up everything, and it would have been absolutely unnecessary for the hon. member to have brought this motion before the House. But no; he prefers to take the other course, he prefers to ignore the depart-

ment entirely, and to bring in this motion. He prefers to rely on those spies in the Railway Department.

MR. HOLMES : How do you know I did so?

MR. MORGANS : Because only they could have given you the information. He prefers to get his information from traitors and spies, in order that he may come down to this House to bring an unjustifiable charge against the Government of this colony. There is another bad feature of this motion that the hon. member would do well to recollect, and I hope he will bear this in mind, and will take to heart what I am now going to say, namely, that the plan he has adopted of getting information from departmental officials is liable to create a spirit of insubordination amongst the employees of the department.

MR. LEAKE : You have no right to make a statement like that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Why make that statement?

MR. MORGANS : I say, if the employees really feel that they can go to a member of Parliament to air their grievances, and that the member will ventilate the matter in this House, instead of going to the head of the department and investigating those grievances through the proper channel—if the officers know and believe that, I say a spirit of insubordination will be aroused in the railway administration of this country or of any country, that will be most serious in its consequences. I ask the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) how he would like the men in his timber mills to go over his head to the directors in London and make statements in regard to his management. If his directors listened and encouraged the men to make those statements, what kind of control would he have over those men in six months? He would have absolutely no control, because the circumstance would spread a spirit of insubordination that would be absolutely fatal to proper administration. The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) said the Commissioner of Railways wanted to blame the small man. As a matter of fact, the Commissioner was most generous, and never blamed anyone, but simply said this cheque had been given at a time when the railways were not under his administration. Surely that does not blame

anybody; and if it is desired to know who was responsible, let hon. members find out who was controlling the railways at that time. It was not generous on the part of the member for Albany to make that statement against the Commissioner. I have concluded my address, but I may say I am perfectly sure the House will give to the speech of the member for East Fremantle its full value. We know there was a spirit of misrepresentation hovering over the whole of the deliverance of that speech. I do not say the hon. member intended to misrepresent, but in his anxiety to say something nasty, and something to compromise the Commissioner, he went on the dangerous ground of misrepresentation. But thanks to the Commissioner, and thanks to the facts which govern these positions at all times when honest men are at the helm, the Commissioner was able to stand up in the House and give a defence of himself and of his officers that will not only satisfy every member, but satisfy the great public of Western Australia.

MR. WILSON: I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. WILSON (Canning): I think it would be just as well to adjourn at this hour of the night, because I am quite sure several other members wish to speak, and there is no earthly chance of finishing the debate before the rising of the House.

THE PREMIER: It is quite early yet.

MR. WILSON: However, I am willing to sit till two or three o'clock in the morning, if the Premier wishes. I agree with the member for Coolgardie (Mr Morgans) that it is a good thing we are really all friends of his, because it would appear he is quite prepared to subordinate his sense of public duty to his friendship, no matter who the person who is attacked. That is a nice spirit to have in one's friend, and I commend him for it to a certain extent; but when a serious matter of this description has been brought forward by an hon. member in all good faith, it is for us to view it, as far as we possibly can, from our public position, and to arrive at a right conclusion. It is no personal charge, I take it, that the member for East Fremantle has brought against the Commissioner. No member of the House would for a moment advance the theory that we expect the Commissioner

to manipulate the details of the department personally. No one for a moment would advance the theory that we expect him to label trucks and sleepers, or to audit the Commissioner's advance account and say why cheques have been paid. That is not what we want for a moment, nor what the member for East Fremantle wants; but we do say that there are certain responsibilities attaching to the Commissioner's office, and he cannot get away from those responsibilities so long as he occupies his present position.

[MR. LEAKE called attention to the fact that no quorum was present. Bells rung, quorum formed, and the debate proceeded.]

MR. WILSON: I was remarking, when attention was called to the want of a quorum, that the charge was not directed against the Commissioner of Railways in his personal capacity.

MR. MORGANS: Nobody said it was.

MR. WILSON: The member for Coolgardie not only said that, but he repeated himself over and over again, and accused the member for East Fremantle of want of friendship in having brought forward the motion.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is the way he brought it forward.

MR. WILSON: I say the Commissioner of Railways must accept the responsibilities of the office.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Certainly.

MR. WILSON: He must further accept the responsibility of the actions of his subordinates, and if these men have been to blame in connection with the administration of his department, then any member of the House, I do not care who he is, is perfectly justified in bringing the question up and having it discussed on the floor of the House. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) said the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) was lost to all sense of responsibility; that he had forgotten that this must mean absolute ruin to the Commissioner of Railways.

THE PREMIER: Because the member for East Fremantle professed special friendship for the Commissioner, to commence with.

MR. MORGANS: I did not say what is asserted, but that does not matter.

MR. WILSON: The words that fell from the member for Coolgardie are exactly as I have quoted them. He said the member for East Fremantle was lost to all sense of responsibility. I want to say that in my opinion the member for East Fremantle has proved his sense of responsibility, inasmuch as he has had the courage to sink all feelings of friendship towards the Commissioner.

THE PREMIER: We know he has not any.

MR. WILSON: Any what?

THE PREMIER: Any friendship.

MR. WILSON: That is merely a statement. There is no proof of that at all. I am dealing now with the remarks of the member for Coolgardie, and I think I have proved that the member for East Fremantle had a very keen sense of his responsibility. He brought forward this motion because he believed that certain things had been carried out wrongly in the administration of the railways of Western Australia, and in my opinion he showed in his speech that at any rate many things had taken place which were deserving of comment and debate, and, if possible, amendment.

[MR. LEAKE again called attention to the state of the House. Bells rung, quorum formed, and the debate proceeded.]

MR. WILSON: What I wanted to point out was that the member for East Fremantle, in bringing forward his motion, justified the position he had taken up, and although the member for Coolgardie attempted to cast ridicule upon the position, and, I am sorry to say, to some extent misrepresented the member for East Fremantle; yet I think the member for East Fremantle was perfectly justified in bringing forward the motion, and he proved to the House that he was justified. If there is any justification required, we have only to turn to the report of the Auditor General, and refer to the minutes which the member for Coolgardie quoted from so largely. If a responsible officer of the Audit Department, who is engaged in auditing the accounts of the Railway Department, will pen such a minute as that which has been referred to by previous speakers, in which he states distinctly that, in his opinion, the management had been guilty of misappropriating moneys, and had attempted to "hood-wink" the department—

MR. MORGANS: He never said that.

MR. LEAKE: Is it in order for members to interject out of their places?

MR. WILSON: If the hon. member remained in his seat and listened to what I said, he would not have come to wrong conclusions: he has been jumping to wrong conclusions all the evening. I do not say the Auditor General made this statement, but I said the officer in the Auditor General's department who has been in the habit of auditing the railway accounts, made the statement. I do not say the Auditor General confirmed the statement, but the statement was made by a responsible officer, of such importance that the Auditor General has printed it in his report. If an officer of the Audit Department, whose duty it was to look into these accounts day by day and week by week, comes to the conclusion that something is wrong in the management and in the accounts, and that he has been "hoodwinked" in his attempt to carry out his official duties, is that not sufficient to cause the member for East Fremantle to bring forward his motion? I say decidedly it is, and no member can contradict me. I was glad to think the member for Coolgardie did not accuse the member for East Fremantle of wilful misrepresentation, although he went near to doing so. He, however, stated that there were political motives at the bottom of this movement.

MR. MORGANS: I said there might be.

MR. WILSON: I hope the House will believe me when I say, so far as I am concerned, there are no political motives in connection with this motion at all; and the member for East Fremantle has sufficient justification for his action in the Auditor General's report. Furthermore, the hon. member has ample means of gaining the bulk of the information which he used in support of the motion. It is the common talk of business men in town that these claims have been made, and that Baxter and Prince's claims have been made against the department.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They do not know them in detail.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Baxter has told me of these claims against the department; Mr. Hedges has told me over and over again about his claims, and that he could not get a settlement from the department. There is no difficulty in

getting this information; yet the Commissioner of Railways talked about traitors in the department, and demanded that the name of the man who had given the information should be divulged. There are scores of men in it, and if the Commissioner wants to know who gave the information, well, I may tell him Mr. Baxter has given information, Mr. Hedges has given information.

MR. MORGANS: They are not employees in the department.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: You might as well plead guilty on the point.

MR. WILSON: The position taken up by the member for Coolgardie is the height of absurdity, to my mind. The member for East Fremantle was justified in bringing forward the motion, and it is for us to debate it in as cool a manner as possible, and come to a conclusion upon it. I have shown, I think, that the member who moved the motion has had abundant cause for doing so, and I intend to deal briefly with the replies given by the Minister. The Minister certainly cast very great blame upon the member for East Fremantle for having brought forward this motion—accused him of being a confirmed fault-finder, and of having taken underhand means to gain his information; also said that the hon. member had induced employees of the department to divulge information, and that if he (the Commissioner) could find out the names of such employees he would have them dismissed. That was the gist of his reply as regards the hon. member (Mr. Holmes). With regard to that hon. member being a confirmed fault-finder, I think that if any man has occasion to find fault with wrong-doing it is when he occupies a public position of this kind. What is he in this House for, but to criticise, to the best of his ability, the administration of the different departments; and if he has any fault to find surely he is justified in finding fault in this way? Certainly his object is pure. I take it his wish is to better the administration, and if he must for such purpose find fault with any Minister, I say that he is perfectly justified in doing so, even though he turn that Minister out of office. With regard to the means he took to obtain his information, the Minister does not know what means he took, nor

does anyone else. I have explained the way in which I have received certain information.

MR. MORGANS: He got it from the railway officials, did he not?

MR. WILSON: I do not know where he got it: I have not the slightest idea; and the Commissioner does not know, nor does the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans); and I say they have no right to rise in this House and to say that the hon. member used undignified means and underhand means to gain the information.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I never used the word "underhand."

MR. WILSON: You used the word "undignified," and I take it that is a term that ought not to have been used in the circumstances; because, if anything, the member for East Fremantle was perfectly dignified in his delivery the other night. He did not descend to any personal abuse, but simply stated his facts as he had gathered them one by one, as he said, believing them to be true, and he left the Commissioner to reply. He asked for explanation. He asked for proof. And what was the proof? Why, every member on the other side who has spoken on the subject has descended to personal abuse of the member for East Fremantle for having dared to bring forward this motion. What is the position of the Commissioner to-night? The Commissioner admitted in his reply that in many or in several items the department were to blame. He said there were extenuating circumstances, but he certainly admitted the department were to blame in several instances. He acknowledged that goods had been lost and had been paid for by the department, and that was one of the charges brought forward. He also concluded by saying that the department were bettering their position and their system day by day. I take it the reply of the Commissioner is in itself sufficient to show this House that the hon. member had good cause to bring up the motion and to have it debated here. If we take some of the instances which the Commissioner admitted, and if we compare his administration with the speech of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) to-night, we shall find that the Commissioner's admissions were perfectly frank, and that

blame was attachable to some of the officers of the department.

MR. HIGHAM: Two years ago.

MR. WILSON: I take it that it does not matter whether it was two years or two months ago.

MR. HIGHAM: It does.

MR. WILSON: It was a departmental fault brought forward in the House for inquiry by the House, and the member for East Fremantle was perfectly justified in bringing it forward. In regard to the 40 trucks purchased by the Government from the Seabrook Battery Company, I do not propose to quibble very much with the price paid, although it appears to me that when a responsible officer of the department values a truck to the department at £40 at the outside, it is stretching one's imagination very much to justify a payment of £90 each. The regulations provide that every railway account shall be guaranteed, or that trades' people, merchants, and others who send goods over the railways, shall pay cash for railage before delivery. I have had to pay cash ever since I refused to give a bank deposit to the Commissioner for the accounts of the company with which I am connected, and the Railway Department will not deliver our goods until they get the money in hard coin. Why has this Seabrook Company been allowed to run up an account of between £4,000 and £5,000? How is it that the department have regulations for one set of people, and demand cash in payment for accounts, ignoring the regulations in connection with another set of people.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Have you looked at the date of that account? This transaction occurred some time ago, and you remember the time the regulation was brought in.

MR. WILSON: There has never been any explanation by the Commissioner in regard to this. He omitted to explain the reason why this company was allowed credit to the amount of £4,000 or £5,000, and that is a blot on the administration, though I do not say who is to blame. When everyone else is made to pay cash, this account was allowed to go on until the Seabrook Battery was, as the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) said, in financial difficulties, and, therefore, the department were glad to take the trucks

almost at any price, in order to liquidate the liability.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I explained last night that the reason the account was allowed to go on was that we did not wish to interfere with an industry that was then being developed, namely the gold-mining industry.

MR. LEAKE: Favouritism.

MR. WILSON: But when my timber company was struggling, we could not get the same concession.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We had good security for the debt referred to.

MR. LEAKE: Why was the claim liquidated by a fictitious set-off?

THE PREMIER: "Fictitious"! that is a good word.

MR. WILSON: I take it that other timber companies in the colony have just as valuable rolling-stock in the hands of the Commissioner as those people had.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is only one company that has rolling-stock.

MR. WILSON: That is beside the question altogether. The explanation which the Commissioner gave in the matter was, as I pointed out at the time, most unsatisfactory. The explanation was to the effect that the Locomotive Engineer had valued these trucks at £40 each; and I must not omit that the engineer had also valued them at £120 each. But that is not a buying value, the opinion being that the trucks to construct as a bit of engineering work would cost £120 each, though to the department they were only worth £30 to £40 each. The explanation the Commissioner gave was that the Locomotive Engineer attended at the subsequent conference at which it was decided to pay £90 each for the trucks, and that he never opened his mouth against the proposal. That was a most unjust position to take up. Was it likely that the subordinate officer was going to open his mouth and protest against the action of his principal and superior officers, and possibly against an action of the Commissioner himself, who was probably at the conference?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: His position at the conference was equal to that of others, and he could give an expression of opinion.

MR. WILSON: I say it is most unjust to cast the slightest blame on the Locomotive Engineer in the matter. In the one instance, he gave what he considered was the absolute value to the department of the trucks, and in the other instance he went to this conference and he had his superior officers sitting round the table, and they decided as a matter of expediency, because the accountant's branch had allowed the account to reach £4,000 or £5,000, to take the trucks at £90 each. That is the true position, is it not? It is absolutely unfair that any blame should be cast on the Locomotive Engineer because he did not protest. There is no doubt some blame is attachable, and whoever is to blame ought to be brought to book. The duty of the member for East Fremantle is to blame the head of the department, and whether that head knows or does not know the circumstances, he must accept the responsibility. In regard to the Hedges matter, it was stated there was a large railrage account standing against him. The Commissioner replied, if I remember rightly, that the department had made many applications for the account, but could not get payment; but it is a well known fact to everyone in Perth, I think, that Mr. Hedges has a claim against the Railway Department in connection with his trucks.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is all right.

MR. WILSON: And is it to be supposed for a moment that Mr. Hedges is going to pay cash for the hire of wagons and railrage account, when he is claiming some £40,000 from the Government?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is all right.

MR. WILSON: But the explanation made by the Commissioner was that the department had made many applications and could not get the money. Of course, the department could not get the money, and why did the Commissioner not explain that Hedges claimed £40,000 against the department under his contract, and that Hedges could not get the matter settled because the department would not allow him to go to arbitration or law in the matter?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is misrepresentation.

MR. WILSON: That is the position as described to me by Mr. Hedges himself. The affair of Messrs. Millar Brothers is another which did not necessitate the member for East Fremantle going to an official or using any "undignified" scheming to get information, because the knowledge is common property. This was a point which the Commissioner did not answer; in fact, the Commissioner seemed to burk the charge altogether. The charge which the member for East Fremantle made was not one of demurrage at all, but one relating to the hire of the trucks. Under the railway tariff it is stipulated that the owner of private lines using Government trucks shall pay 1s. 3d. per truck up to five miles.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is all right, if you will take my words I used last night.

MR. WILSON: And above five miles 2s. 6d. per truck.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I use the word "rent" instead of "hire"; that is all.

MR. WILSON: What the Commissioner said was—I tried to get the correct information from him, but could not—that the firm used the department's trucks, and the department used the firm's trucks, and that there was a difference of £69 to the credit of the firm. That is what I understood the Commissioner to say at the time, and I took a note, though at this moment I cannot lay my hand on that note.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is a reciprocity arrangement between us.

MR. WILSON: There is no reciprocity beyond the tariff. Do Messrs. Millar pay 2s. 6d. per truck, the same as other people?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes; they do.

MR. WILSON: Why did you not give us a direct answer last night? I was very much inclined to think that Messrs. Millar did not pay the 2s. 6d., but were getting some special advantage that no other timber company could possibly get.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is just the same adjustment to-day as before, but I was under a misapprehension, and thought the account referred to demurrage, whereas it referred to hire.

The member for East Fremantle did not mention hire or demurrage, but I took it to mean demurrage.

MR. WILSON: The hon. member made his charge very clear. Indeed it was so clear that it was imprinted on my memory, and I was determined that when I spoke to-night I would try to extract a direct answer from the Commissioner as to what the charge was to Millar Brothers. What I want to point out is that, if Millar Brothers paid 1s. 3d. per truck at all on the Government railways, it was a wrong charge, because they have no mill (except the one right on the Government line) within five miles of the Government line.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They have a mill at Torbay.

MR. WILSON: I said Millar Brothers had not a sawmill within a five miles radius of the Government lines.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They have one beyond the five miles.

MR. WILSON: Therefore if they pay a rate of 1s. 3d., it is a wrong charge.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: You said they paid 1s. 6d.

MR. WILSON: If the hon. gentleman listened when I was speaking, he would be able to reply accurately. When he has finished I will go on. The hon. gentleman seems to think he can carry on a conversation, but I cannot get on if that is done. What I want to ask the Commissioner of Railways through you, Mr. Speaker, is this: Did Millar Brothers pay a 1s. 3d. Government rate for any of their trucks at all?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member would be out of order in answering. He cannot speak at the same time as another member.

MR. WILSON: It is a very customary form that is used in the House.

THE SPEAKER: It may be used, but it is out of order to ask any hon. member a question. Every member is supposed to address the Speaker, and not any other member at all.

MR. WILSON: I shall be very pleased to conform to that rule, and I hope other hon. members will do the same.

THE SPEAKER: If it were always followed, it would lead to a better system of debate in the House.

MR. WILSON: I wish to refer briefly to this question of interlocking gear at the

station yards. The Commissioner never replied to the charge that the member for East Fremantle brought forward, and the remarks of the member for Coolgardie were entirely beside the question. He never disputed for one moment that portions of interlocking gear had been removed from Perth and taken to the goldfields. If I remember aright, what he said was that interlocking cabins had been erected in Perth in one position, and shortly afterwards pulled down and re-erected in another position; and to the best of his belief the total cost of this work was charged up against loan expenditure. I think that was the charge made by the member for East Fremantle, and it had nothing to do with the removal of portions of interlocking gear from one part of the colony to another. I repeat the charge has never been replied to satisfactorily. With regard to the shortage of sleepers which has been made so light of by members on the Government side of the House, it runs to 70 trucks of sleepers, and I consider it is a very large matter. Although I admit there was some rush at the time, and possibly some excuse for shortages, yet when we take into consideration that the excuse is that certain clerks have given receipts for timber they never received we must be of opinion that the answer is unsatisfactory, and I should have liked some explanation as to the course adopted towards those clerks who were responsible for giving these double receipts. If a clerk has been in the habit of giving a receipt twice for sleepers, I take it he should very shortly get his walking notice and be dismissed. Have those clerks been dealt with? That is the question that comes into my mind, and it is a question which has never been replied to, as far as I can understand. Seventy trucks of sleepers cannot be spirited away in a night. It means four miles of sleepers and about 400 tons dead weight. You cannot carry those away in five minutes or even in 24 hours, therefore it shows conclusively that there has been very gross mismanagement as far as the clerical staff are concerned. The member for Coolgardie says he knows where those sleepers are. It is a pity he did not know before, and advise the department.

MR. MORGANS: I wish I had known, I would have done so. You must

remember they were not all lost in one night.

MR. WILSON: I come now to what I consider is really the most serious charge of the whole lot, and that is the charge which the Commissioner of Railways justly said he in the first instance was not responsible for. I admit that, but his predecessor was. I refer to the sum of £339 odd paid into a bank at Northam and left lying there. I am not going to find much fault about the paying into the bank at Northam, but I do find fault with the system of book-keeping or auditing which allowed that money to lie there for three or four years without being discovered. This is where fault comes in regarding the present Commissioner's time. The Commissioner's advance account, which had a credit, was drawn upon for £339 odd to balance the railway books. The Commissioner's advance account was utilised to pay a private person's account in the railway ledger. That was wrong in the first instance, and, if it had not been done, this account would have remained open and it would easily have been discovered that this sum of money was missing. Then what took place? At the end of 1896 this Commissioner's advance account was closed after having been duly audited. Where does the audit come in? Surely there is blame attachable to the audit, when you consider that this Commissioner's advance account, from which the sum of £339 had been wrongly taken, was passed without note. Surely there must be something wrong.

[MR. LEAKE again called attention to the state of the House. Bells rung, quorum formed, and the debate proceeded.]

MR. WILSON: I was speaking on the question of this cheque which was paid into the bank at Northam in September, 1895, and had been lost until just lately. That alone, to my mind, justified a motion of this sort. Not that anyone for a moment thinks the hon. gentleman at the head of this department had anything to do, personally, with the amount lying at Northam for that length of time. Not for a moment. If the hon. member had known the money was there he would have withdrawn it, but the money was discovered by the Minister speaking

to the bank-manager, who stated that a sum of money was lying at the bank to the Minister's credit. I think hon. members will agree with me that the system of book-keeping which permits an account of £339 to be closed by a cheque on the Commissioner's advance account and that account to be audited—

MR. A. FORREST: The account was passed by the Auditor General.

MR. WILSON: If it was passed by the Auditor General, then the Auditor General must be to blame; and if this is the kind of auditing that goes on, then the auditor's certificate is not worth the paper it is written on, and I say an inquiry should be held into the matter, and the sooner the better. I hope members will consider this motion seriously, and not think it is a personal matter. I do not think the Commissioner has any better friends in the Assembly than those sitting on the Opposition side of the House; I say advisedly, that the members of the Opposition have just as much respect for the Commissioner of Railways in his private capacity as anyone else has; but as long as the Commissioner fills a position of responsibility at the head of a responsible department, he must be ready and willing to accept the blame attachable to his subordinate officers. I would welcome a Royal Commission of inquiry into this department. Such an inquiry can do no harm, and it may do a lot of good if only to put the General Manager and other officials on their mettle, and cause them to do better than they have done in the past.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pillarra): I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	7
Noes	15

Majority against ... 8

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Conolly	Mr. Connor
Mr. Holmes	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Kinneghill	Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Lenke	Mr. Harper
Mr. Wallace	Mr. Higham
Mr. Wilson	Mr. Hubble
Mr. Robson (Teller).	Mr. Lefroy
	Mr. Locke
	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. Morgans
	Mr. Pennelfather
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Quinlan
	Mr. Throssell
	Mr. Rason (Teller).

Motion thus negatived, and the debate continued.

MR. KINGSMILL: I somewhat regret the decision arrived at by the House.

MR. A. FORREST: What did you do the other night?

MR. KINGSMILL: I fail to see what the interjection of the hon. member has to do with this debate. In the subject under consideration the other night, no hon. member had to answer charges such as have been made against the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) by the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans). The charges made by that gentleman were such that no member should be called on to answer them on the spur of the moment, and the charges cannot be answered lightly, I may say not so lightly as the hon. member made them. Taking into consideration the two principal speeches in the debate, the speeches of the member for East Fremantle and the Commissioner of Railways, I have no hesitation in making up my mind to support the motion of the member for East Fremantle. It appears to me that in answer to the charges, the Minister has confined himself to making what I can only describe as a plea of guilty with extenuating circumstances. How far these extenuating circumstances may weigh with hon. members will be shown in the division which will take place at the termination of the debate. One of the extenuating circumstances which the Commissioner of Railways submitted was that some of the charges made were matters of ancient history. I may remind hon. members that this may well be so, because it must naturally be that not until some time afterwards will incidents like those mentioned by the member for East Fremantle leak out from the carefully and jealously guarded seclusion of the Railway Department. The impression anybody would gain from this debate is that the Railway Department appear to have an almost fatal facility for losing all sorts of inanimate objects; that no limit can be set to the things they lose. They have lost in one instance, as the Commissioner admitted, 8,500 sleepers. Have hon. members ever considered what 8,500 sleepers mean? Placed end to end, they would extend to a distance of $14\frac{3}{4}$ miles, and would aggregate in weight 450 tons. Placed side by side, they would cover $10\frac{1}{2}$

acres; and yet these sleepers disappeared! As I think I have heard the Premier remark on one or two occasions, they

Fold up their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

The department have also lost those other articles, which one would have thought they would have had no difficulty in tracing—chaff-cutters, threshing machines, windmills, and articles which almost force themselves obtrusively on the notice of the general public, which have disappeared as though by magic from the care of the department. From instances which have come under my notice, and which have been supplied to me by persons outside the department, and supplied to me on the authority of reliable business men who are in the habit of doing business with the railways, I might quote numerous incidents almost as heinous as those quoted by the hon. member. I could tell the Commissioner of Railways of one instance where two trucks of timber were shipped from a point in the Darling Ranges to Fremantle, where they utterly disappeared from the face of the earth, and where, after two months' anxious inquiry on the part of the consignees, this timber turned up—I might give hon. members half an hour to guess where, and they would never succeed—turned up at Cossack.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is where the timber was intended for. It was shipped to Cossack.

MR. KINGSMILL: Well, I did not think the Commissioner would have made that answer. The timber was consigned to a firm of merchants in Fremantle for the purpose of erecting a building in Fremantle. It appears, from what I have heard, to have been thrust by stealth into the hold of a steamer in the dead of night, which steamer was going to Cossack, and as I said, the timber disappeared from the ken of man. It has often been a subject of remark in this House that it is far easier to find fault than to repair an error. If I may be allowed to make a suggestion, I shall recommend to the Commissioner of Railways that he should inquire into and carefully consider the source of all these mistakes, because undoubtedly such mistakes do occur; and again speaking, not on my own authority, but on that of well known and reliable business men

who do a lot of business with the Railway Department, these mistakes appear to arise with greater frequency here than they do in other countries. I would ask the Commissioner to consider whence these mistakes arise, and I think he will find that the fountain head of all the mistakes in the way of losses of articles consigned by the public through the railways can be traced to the Fremantle yards; and there I think, if the Commissioner investigates with a dispassionate eye, he will find that there are various causes which will contribute more to the present chaotic result, for I believe the Commissioner has assured us that the system is perfect, but the results are chaotic—he will find the reason for these chaotic results of the management of the railways. It appears that in the yards at Fremantle there is a certain, what may be called debatable ground, between two great departments of the public service: between the department of railways and the department of customs; and the unfortunate man who is in receipt of goods shipped from the other colonies and sent to places in this colony whither they have to travel by rail, is indeed in a sorry plight when he falls between those two departments.

MR. HARPER: Have the lost sleepers gone there?

MR. KINGSMILL: I would remind the hon. member that I qualified the remarks I have to make by saying that the people who ship goods from the other colonies which have to travel to their destinations in this colony by rail are very unlucky if they fall into the hands of these two departments, because the goods are tossed from one department to the other like a shuttlecock between two battledores, and the shifting of responsibility which goes on between these departments is, I believe, most harassing to the public and discreditable to the departments. It is an open secret that these two departments do not get on well together; and I do not know whether it is in the power of the Commissioner or of the Premier to take steps to ensure better working, but I would ask those Ministers, in all sincerity, to use their best endeavours to obtain such a result. Again, I am informed by various people who do a good deal of business with the railways that customers

suffer much from the fact that over what is known as "the farm" at Fremantle there is no efficient outdoor supervision; there is nobody to whom finality or responsibility can be traced. I am told it is possible, on inquiries being made, for one person to shift the responsibility to the shoulders of another officer, and that there is practically no end to this circumlocution. I ask the Commissioner, and I do so in a friendly spirit, to use his best endeavours to obviate such a state of affairs. Again, I believe that in loading trucks a system is carried out which is very disadvantageous, for I am informed that trucks for various destinations are loaded at separate doors of the goods sheds. As it might be, there is one door for Kalgoorlie, another for Menzies, another for Broad Arrow, and so on; and it often happens there may be some eight or nine trolleys waiting to discharge loads at the Kalgoorlie entrance, but none at the Broad Arrow, none at the Menzies, and still there is one unfortunate man striving with the Kalgoorlie truck, while the Broad Arrow gentleman and the Menzies representative are sitting down in peace and quietness enjoying a more or less well-earned smoke. Again, I notice that hon. members have not touched upon one or two little disadvantages from which the passengers in this country suffer. I think the Commissioner of Railways can have but little to say in favour of the present exorbitant fares charged, at all events on suburban lines. In speaking of railway fares in this House, I am aware that I am addressing hon. members on an unsympathetic subject, on a subject upon which they are but little interested; but I would ask hon. members on the Government side of the House for once to study these matters that concern the public: I would ask them whether something cannot be done to remedy the state of affairs which at present exists in the matter of passenger traffic. The slight concessions already made to the travelling public have met with most encouraging results, and I think I am justified in saying, from my own personal observation—and the Commissioner can correct me if I am wrong—that since the cheap excursion fares were made an order of the day on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, the traffic has greatly in-

creased; and this points to the fact that were fares reduced, the increased traffic would more than compensate for the reduction in the money value of the fares.

MR. CONNOR: Do you blame the Commissioner for that?

MR. KINGSMILL: Anybody occupying a humble position in the House as I do, would not dare for a moment to blame the Commissioner. I simply throw these facts out as a suggestion, which possibly might be taken advantage of. Again, I hear there are some rather stringent and harassing regulations in force on the railway. I believe, for instance, that if a man proposes to journey from say Perth to Claremont for the purpose of meeting somebody on the railway station there, and, when he gets to Claremont, finds his friend is not there, and wishes to get on to Fremantle, he cannot rebook in the same train. I would like to know if this is a fact, and if so why it is a fact. I have thought over this regulation many times, but cannot fathom the inwardness of it. I am sorry the Commissioner spoke so early in the debate, or otherwise he might have afforded the knowledge I have asked for. Although I am supporting the member for East Fremantle, there is one thing I am able to say, and which I think I am justified in saying, namely that the people who have given me the information I have made use of seem to think there is, at all events a slight tendency to improvement; and I only hope that that tendency will continue and increase in strength. I have been told by people who have been shipping goods lately, that the very fact of this motion having been brought forward has stimulated the Railway Department to a state of briskness altogether foreign to them hitherto. I trust the tendency towards improvement will continue, and that a time will arrive within a measurable distance, when the public of Western Australia will be able to claim that the railways are made for the people, and not the people for the railways. With the object of encouraging that improvement, and, in all sincerity, of helping the Commissioner in a task which I think every member will admit to be arduous, when we consider the responsibilities of his position as Commissioner of Railways,

I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion:

That all the words after "that" be struck out, with a view of inserting in lieu thereof the words, "a Commission shall be appointed to inquire, during the recess, into the administration of the Railway Department."

MR. WALLACE (Yalgoo): I second the amendment with great pleasure, and would like to say a few words to justify my action. We have heard the charges made by the member for East Fremantle, and the replies by the Commissioner of Railways, and also the explanation given by that able champion of the Government, the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans); but all I hear only goes further to prove to me the desirability of the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the administration of the Railway Department. I remember hearing an interjection about the report by the Auditor General on the Railway Department, and though I may not always agree with the Auditor General, I am of opinion that unless the whole of the departments are placed entirely under his control, we cannot hold him responsible for their audit. In the case of the railways, we know very well the Auditor General has given a report, but on threshing this out we find that he does not audit the accounts, and I support the statement of the member for East Fremantle that the accounts of the department are not audited by the Auditor General. With all due respect to the Auditor General, I still think the accounts are not audited by him, and that alone is sufficient ground for an inquiry. Another little matter which further supports my action is the remark by the mover of the motion that a certain amount of friction exists between the Locomotive Engineer and the General Manager of the Railways; and I take it that the member for East Fremantle had some grounds for making the assertion. At any rate, I have no reason to doubt its accuracy.

MR. HOLMES: It is not only my assertion.

MR. WALLACE: Having heard the reply of the Commissioner, I say the assertion has not been refuted.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The truth too well known. No refutation is wanted.

MR. WALLACE: I must confess I am not behind the scenes in any of the departments. When an hon. member makes an assertion, I take it that it is made in good faith; and if a Minister does not think it worth while to refute a charge, we must believe the mover of the motion. Until the Commissioner refutes the accusations made, I cannot do otherwise than believe they are true. Furthermore, when we take the charges as a whole, we cannot but say that the Commissioner has practically admitted the accuracy of the statement that there are discrepancies in the cash balances and in goods; and I think it is sufficient ground for any hon. member to advocate or support the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the working of a department. I regret, if the Commissioner of Railways has anything up his sleeve, that he has not given it to the House, for it would have saved a lot of superfluous talk. I pass on to the member for Coolgardie, who levelled charges against the junior members on the Opposition side of the House.

A MEMBER: It was very effective.

MR. WALLACE: Very effective! I listened intently, wondering what he was going to do. The amount of words that came from the hon. member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), in dealing with the question before the House, was such that it would puzzle any member to know what he was talking about. I make this reference to the speech of the hon. member, knowing he has given the House information placed at his disposal by the Minister. Reference has been made to the loss of £6,000, and it has been stated that this amount, as compared with the three millions of revenue earned during the same period, is a mere "fleabite" not worth taking up the time of the House.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Not £6,000, but £700.

MR. WALLACE: I believe that, comparatively speaking, it is not worth debating; but does it not go to prove the charges made by the member for East Fremantle? In my opinion it does, and if the Minister is in a position to satisfy members that the charges have no foundation, and that he could refute every one of them, it was very unfair to the House not to say so.

MR. MONGER: He has refuted them all.

MR. WALLACE: That is a matter of opinion, but to my way of thinking he has not, and that view is shared by many members on the Government side of the House. He has practically admitted that these charges are correct. He certainly made explanations as to many of them, and I admit that some of them were uncontrollable; but then there were some that were the result of gross carelessness. I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment.

MR. LEAKE (speaking on the amendment): I am surprised the Commissioner of Railways will not agree to an adjournment of this question, because the member for East Fremantle desires to reply very fully on the subject.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: He had plenty of time to reply.

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) assures the House, not that he is actually unable to reply, but that he does not wish to do so to-night. He has had a pretty severe attack made upon him by the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), and it is natural to suppose he would like to make an adequate reply. I intend to support the amendment for this reason, that the Commissioner of Railways last night said he courted discussion and inquiry into the administration of his department; and that being so, I presume the hon. member will not venture to oppose the amendment. The right hon. gentleman opposite laughs, or sneers, or whatever it may be called; but of course he was not here last night to hear his hon. colleague give his speech, in which that hon. gentleman stated that he courted inquiry. We know perfectly well it often happens, as far as Ministers are concerned, that they say one thing one night and contradict it another; but that need not really affect us. I did not suppose the right hon. gentleman would fail to support his colleague in what seemed to me to be a very commendable expression of intention, namely that his department should be inquired into.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: If there was a necessity.

MR. LEAKE: No proviso was made last night by the Minister as to necessity arising, and if the hon. gentleman him-

self is to be judge of the necessity, we know perfectly well there never will be an inquiry. It does not astonish me to find that the Minister was not sincere apparently in what he told the House last night. Of course, very often people will say anything when they get into a tight place. That the hon. gentleman was in a tight place is admitted, and it was his duty if possible to try and wriggle out of it. I do not for a moment deny it. I shall be very sorry if the hon. gentleman tries to avoid this inquiry. During this discussion there has been abundant proof that inquiry is necessary. No one wants to make a charge against the Commissioner of Railways, but when we know that there are so many rumours abroad, made not only by the general public but by members of this House, it is just as well that this question should crop up in Parliament, and that members should have an opportunity of declaring by their votes whether or not they approve of the administration of the Railway Department.

MR. HIGHAM: Give us a chance.

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member will have a chance of voting upon this motion, but we know perfectly well that he dare not express the convictions which he honestly entertains.

MR. HIGHAM: Does he not?

THE PREMIER: Is the hon. member in order in saying of another hon. member that he dare not express his convictions?

THE SPEAKER: No. I think it is an unparliamentary expression to apply to another member. I think the hon. member ought to withdraw that expression.

MR. LEAKE: Certainly, sir, if you think it better that it should be withdrawn; and perhaps the right hon. gentleman opposite would also withdraw the expression which he directed towards me at the same moment, that it was contemptible.

THE PREMIER: I said "contemptible remarks." I withdraw the expression. It is true, for all that.

THE SPEAKER: I did not hear the hon. member make use of it. The hon. member has withdrawn it; so I conclude he did make it.

MR. LEAKE: The right hon. gentleman has repeated it, and I ask that he should withdraw it again.

THE PREMIER: I withdraw it again, if you wish it.

MR. LEAKE: I am in absolute fear and trembling lest I might meet with some sudden disaster, and be subject to some really violent attack by the Premier. In the course of the debate, reference has been made to the Auditor General's report. I know it is a long report, but I must make reference to it, and particularly to the portion of it that has been quoted. I refer to the addenda to the Auditor General's report which begins at page 274, and I propose to quote the addenda to the House in order that hon. members may thoroughly appreciate what was in the mind of the Auditor General when he submitted, for the consideration of the House, this very important statement. It is a report by a subordinate officer of the Auditor General, and in referring to the railway department, that officer says:

That the management of the railways has been guilty of misappropriation of money, and the management attempted to hoodwink the Audit Department.

These are two statements which are forwarded by the Auditor General for the consideration of hon. members. It is said this is not a statement by a responsible officer, that it is not made by the Auditor General; but we find it embodied in the Auditor General's report, and the curious part of it is that nobody seems to have taken the slightest notice of it. The Auditor General was either right or wrong in referring to it. If he was right, some sort of notice should have been taken of the observation, and at least an explanation offered to the House; or, if not, the Auditor General should have been asked by those in authority why it was he made such reckless statements, or allowed such reckless statements to appear in his report without calling for an explanation or giving an explanation. It is a very serious matter, and as the Auditor General is an officer of Parliament and responsible to Parliament, I think it is due, out of respect to Parliament, that Ministers should take notice of such a sweeping accusation when it is made against one of their body.

[MR. HOLMES called attention to the state of the House. Bells rung, a quorum formed, and the debate proceeded.]

MR. LEAKE: I was pointing out what a really damaging statement this was, and how curious it was that nobody seemed to take notice of it. If the Commissioner of Railways can submit to remarks like this, he is more extraordinary than the House takes him to be. He smarts under a general and legitimate attack made against his department in a parliamentary manner and in the proper place by the member for East Fremantle; yet he can quietly submit to being told by a Government officer, and a responsible statutory officer—

MR. HIGHAM: Understrapper.

MR. LEAKE: Is that a proper interjection for the hon. member to make?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member ought to make these interjections.

MR. LEAKE: It is very trying to speak at this time of the night and to make myself interesting to hon. members opposite, therefore I ask hon. members to let me go on quietly, as I have a number of quotations to make. The charge the Auditor General makes against the Commissioner of Railways is that the management by the Commissioner of Railways, or for which he is responsible, has been guilty of misappropriating moneys. If I understand language, that means theft. Nobody supposes for a moment that such an expression can properly apply to the Minister. But how reckless is the system, and how feeble must be the administration which can sit still and smart under such a serious accusation as that! Can anyone suppose or believe, if we did not know the hon. gentleman, that he could sit still under such a cruel accusation as that? Yet he says not a word, nor is there the most feeble of remonstrances against the Auditor General, who tries to make such a sweeping, and if untrue such a wicked, accusation. I know what the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) would do if the Auditor General or anybody else said he had been guilty of misappropriating money. There would not be space for the two gentlemen in the same room; and the member for Coolgardie would never sit still and permit anybody to accuse him of such a horrible thing. The report goes on to say that the management—again the management of the Commissioner of Railways—had

attempted to hoodwink the Audit Department. That is just as bad as telling the Treasurer that he "cooks" his accounts. The Auditor General tells the Commissioner of Railways that the latter has been hoodwinking the Audit Department. In the absence of any contradiction, we must assume that it is true.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The department asked him to withdraw the statement.

MR. LEAKE: And whilst those accusations remain unanswered, I think the member for East Fremantle would have been lacking in his duty had he not brought this matter prominently before the public.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Read page 280, "General Manager." That will help you.

MR. LEAKE: I like to give the Commissioner every opportunity of refuting every charge and every accusation.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Read letter from Auditor General to the General Manager of the Railways, first.

MR. MORGANS: Meanwhile, the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) is leaving the House.

MR. LEAKE: We want hon. members opposite to keep as many members in the House as possible, because I really cannot talk to empty benches. If I am to speak, I must have an audience.

MR. CONNOR: You have not much of an Opposition audience now, as there is only one Opposition member listening to you.

[MR. LEAKE called attention to the state of the House. Bells rung, a quorum formed, and the debate proceeded.]

MR. LEAKE: I must thank hon. members for returning so quickly, and I am glad the Premier has come in, because it enables me again to point out, for his special benefit, because it was for his special benefit I was speaking, those serious charges which he and his colleagues have permitted to remain uncontradicted. How the Premier with his keen sense of right and wrong can permit an officer in the position of the Auditor General to publish statements which, if not made under the cloak of privilege, would be the grossest libel upon his hon. colleague the Commissioner of Railways,

I cannot understand; the statements, of course, being that the management of the railways had been guilty of misappropriating moneys, and that the management had attempted to hoodwink the Audit Department. The least we could expect from the Premier would be that he should have caused an inquiry to be held; because I am perfectly certain that all of us know very well that the Premier, with his high sense of honour and with the regard he has for parliamentary dignity and Ministerial responsibility, would never permit himself to associate with a man who had been charged with misappropriating money, or who was capable, in a political sense, of hoodwinking anybody. But that is unfortunately the position. If a statement like this be made and remain uncontradicted by the officer affected, what can we expect? What can we think of that hon. gentleman's conduct? It is of course practically an attack upon the Administration generally, and it ought to be refuted: it ought not to be passed over lightly.

WANT OF QUORUM—ADJOURNMENT.

MR. LEAKE again called attention to the state of the House.

THE SPEAKER, after the bells had been rung and the usual interval had elapsed, finding there was not a quorum of members present, adjourned the House at 12:35 midnight, until Wednesday afternoon.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 1st November, 1899.

Motion—Permanent Military Force—Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Bill, third reading—Bank Note Protection Bill, third reading—Dentists Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Adjournment: Delay in Business.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

MOTION—PERMANENT MILITARY FORCE.

HON. F. M. STONE (North) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, a permanent military force should be formed for the defence of the colony, and for this purpose the Government should consult the Commandant as to the advisability of doing so, and of what force it should consist.

He said: In moving the motion standing in my name, it has often occurred to me that it was desirable a permanent military force should be established in this colony; and, to my mind, the time has now arrived when we should form such a force, which would be a nucleus for a larger force for the defence of the colony.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: A standing army.

HON. F. M. STONE: A standing army, as the hon. member says. Of course it may be said we may go into federation, and that under federation there will be one standing army for Australia. Still, it seems to me that could be no objection to our forming the nucleus of a standing military force in this colony, because that force can then be handed over to the Federal Government, and there would be no objection to it. I am not going to say anything against the volunteer forces of this colony, which are useful in their way; but we know there is this difference between them and a permanent military force, that the volunteers can resign at any time, and perhaps in a case of emergency we would find we could not rely on having the number of volunteers at present on the roll. We have seen to-day what a permanent force would really mean; we have seen that we can find a fine body of men in this colony to form such a force; and it seems to me that when those men return to the colony,