

chest. It would be almost childish to borrow with one hand, and hoard up with the other. The mere fact alone of our having spent more money in a given time than we actually received from public revenue within that time is nothing to be alarmed at, so long as we have not incurred a deficit. That is the point. I find that a large portion of this expenditure from current revenue and from the accumulated surplus, has been spent upon useful public works—roads, bridges, railways, tramways, and public buildings; and I maintain that if we had not expended this money upon these necessary works it would only mean that we should have had to take so much out of Loan money for the same purpose. Possibly that is the shortest and best explanation that can be given of what looks at first sight an alarming increase in the public expenditure of the colony, to the amount of some £150,000 in one year. I will say no more on this point, but merely add that, on looking around us, I think we have a great deal to be thankful for and to congratulate ourselves upon. The season we have been blessed with this year, compared with previous years, is something to be very much pleased with indeed, when we think of the terrible drought of recent years, which caused such disaster all through the colony, and especially in the Northern parts of the colony, which I am happy to say are showing signs of recovery. Our pastoral prospects at the present moment are most encouraging, our flocks and herds are increasing, and this important industry may be said to a certain extent to be flourishing. Then, again, there is the marvellous output of gold, and the probability of a still further increase—a reasonable prospect of a very large increase; and many other indications of prosperity that are visible all around us, if we only look for them. We cannot expect to have all these favourable indications without also having some drawbacks; still I think that, on the whole, there is good sound reason for congratulating ourselves upon the prospects and prosperity of the colony. At the same time, I think it behoves the Government to be careful. I am entirely in accord with those politicians who warn the Government to be careful and cautious, and not to be led away with the idea that there is no end to our financial

prosperity. I would like to keep them up to the mark in this respect, and to inculcate upon them the necessity of prudence and caution. I think that honest criticism can only do them good. Whatever amount of criticism is directed to that end, so long as it is honest and fair, it cannot be reasonably objected to. It may be as vigorous as possible. I do not object to vigorous criticism—perhaps I am inclined to be somewhat too vigorous at times myself, but I think that good, healthy opposition, and vigorous criticism of the financial policy of the Government, so long as it is fair and above-board—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—cannot be reasonably resented by any honest Government. That is all I would say in counselling the Government to be careful of the finances—to see that every pound expended is expended upon something that is, either directly or indirectly, reproductive, and not upon useless and unproductive works, upon mere bricks and mortar, upon needless decoration and ornamentation, marble pillars, and extravagances of that character. So long as the money is available, and so long as it is wisely expended upon reproductive public works and in opening up the country districts, I do not think we need fear the result. I beg to move that the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech to both Houses of Parliament be agreed to by this House:—

*"To His Excellency Sir William Cleaver  
"Francis Robinson, Knight Grand Cross  
"of the Most Distinguished Order of St.  
"Michael and St. George, Governor and  
"Commander-in-Chief in and over the  
"Colony of Western Australia and its  
"Dependencies, &c., &c., &c."*

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—  
"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful  
"subjects, the members of the Legislative  
"Assembly of Western Australia, in Par-  
"liament assembled, beg to assure Your  
"Excellency of our loyalty and affection  
"to our Most Gracious Sovereign.

"We thank Your Excellency for the  
"Speech you have been good enough to  
"address to us, and shall give it our most  
"careful consideration and attention."

MR. PIESSE: In rising to second the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech, while regretting the necessity that has occurred for summoning Parlia-



ment at this time of the year, I think, after hearing the remarks of the Attorney General in explanation of the Bill which has necessitated our being called together, it must be admitted that in acting as they have done the Government have been actuated only by a desire to give the newly enfranchised and all parties an opportunity of taking a part in the approaching elections, and of preventing the colony being deprived of a Parliament during the long interregnum that must otherwise occur. With regard to the Speech itself, it does not call for much comment; at the same time I would like to pass some few remarks with regard to the subject mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Speech, with reference to our goldfields. There is no denying the fact that we have before us evidence that there are within the boundaries of this colony goldfields of an almost unbounded extent. We have evidence before us daily that these fields as yet are in their infancy, and that it is to her goldfields that Western Australia must largely look for a great future. It cannot be denied that these gold discoveries have been the turning point in the history of this colony. Had it not been for these discoveries, we should no doubt have gone on in the even tenour of our way, as in the past; and it would have been years before we could have hoped to attain the prominent position we now occupy in the eyes of the world, and the still more prominent position that we are likely to occupy in the near future. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that we have also other resources that may be coupled with our goldfields, and that it would be suicidal policy on our part to neglect those resources. Unless we become producers, unless we are able to feed these multitudes that are coming into the colony to develop our goldfields, what will be the use of these rich discoveries to us? If we are to go on, as in the past, importing our food supplies, what benefit will our goldfields, and the population which they are attracting, and are likely to attract, confer upon us? The result will be that the wealth that is wrested from our soil will be sent away to enrich other countries, instead of going into the pockets of our own hard-worked toilers who have taken up land in the colony. Unless we do something

to help these people, and unless agricultural development goes on hand in hand with the development of our goldfields, we shall not reap the advantages we ought to reap from our vast auriferous wealth. The richness of the fields is undoubted. I have had ample evidence of that from those who have visited the fields, persons who are directly interested with myself in commercial ventures, and who are of opinion, from what they themselves saw, that these fields are only in their infancy, and that they will yet astonish the world. All that is required is the necessary capital for their development. There can be no doubt that wealth is there for those who wish to seek it. At the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that we must do something else besides developing our goldfields, if the colony is going to derive any substantial benefit from these discoveries. As I have already said, unless our own farmers are in a position to supply the population attracted to these fields with the necessaries of life in the way of food for themselves and fodder for their stock, the people of this colony will not reap that advantage from these goldfields which we have a reason to expect. We are told that public works in the shape of railways have been pushed ahead to such an extent that most of the outlying parts of the colony are now brought, or about to be brought, into direct communication with the centres of population, and that these railways afford our producers a means of bringing the products of the soil to market. But, if those who have watched the course of these railways will just consider a few moments, and take a note of the lines already constructed and extended, they will find that agricultural development has not kept pace with railway extension. We have not far to look for the reason. The reason is that unless you help the farmers more than you are helping them at present, by further protecting them from outside competition, the same thing will go on for ever. Foreign competition will drive our farmers to the wall. Although some additional protection was provided for the agricultural interests by the tariff passed last session, still the fact remains that it has not had the desired effect, so far as the farmer is concerned.

MR. SIMPSON: No, the miller got it.

MR. PIESSE: We still continue to import flour and other produce, and shall continue to do so unless some further steps are taken for shutting out these foreign importations and protecting our own farmers. The markets of the world may now be said to be in a state of bankruptcy, and what is the result so far as this colony is concerned? The colony is simply a dumping ground for the products of other countries, to the detriment of our own producers, the men who ought to reap the benefits and advantages of our goldfields, instead of the money going away to enrich the people of other countries. The only remedy for this state of things is to protect our own producers. You would soon bring that about if you did what I suggested you should do, afford still further protection to the farmers of the colony. A duty of £5 a ton on flour—it is no use arguing about it—would bring about the desired result in a very short time. It may be said that this would leave the consumer at the mercy of the local producer. I think it would soon be found that local competition would very soon level prices. That has been the case elsewhere. Take Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, and Tasmania, with their protective tariffs, and what do we find? We find the price of produce in those colonies lower than ever, simply because competition within their own borders has brought about what we want to bring about here. Until you assist the farmers of this colony to develop the land, and encourage people to settle upon it, it is no use going on with public works in the shape of railways, or trying to push forward the colony. Railways alone cannot do it. You must encourage the cultivation of the soil by settling people upon the land, and protecting their industries. Of course I do not forget that we had before us last session a Homesteads Bill having this object in view—the settlement of the land; but that Bill has not yet been put into operation, though I hope it will soon; and the result, no doubt, will be that we shall see more settlement going on. But what encouragement is there for our farmers to go in for cultivation of wheat when South Australia and other colonies can land their produce in this colony at a cheaper rate than we can produce it, although we have thousands of acres capable

of producing larger crops than they have in Victoria. Those colonies being longer established, and possessing greater facilities and greater wealth than we have, are in a position to undersell our own farmers on their own ground, and they simply make Western Australia a dumping ground for the whole of their surplus supplies. Talk about building railways, what inducement is it to the settler or the farmer to offer him a railway, when you flood the market with foreign importations? It is simply offering him a moral sham. A man living 150 miles away is simply tabooed at once. That man cannot possibly compete with the man living only 40 miles away. The railway rates should be differential rates, so as to give those residing long distances away some chance of competing with those who are more favourably situated. We all know that most of the land in proximity to our towns has been taken up long ago, and what inducement is there to people to go farther into the country, and settle down in the hope of being able to make a living out of the soil? All the land in the Avon Valley within reach of the railway has been taken up—

MR. RICHARDSON: Is it all cultivated?

MR. PIESSE: A great deal of it is, and a great deal more would be, if our farmers were protected as they ought to be. I say it is no use talking about building railways, unless you also encourage people to settle on the soil, and to cultivate it, and place them all on the same footing by adopting differential rates, to enable those at a distance to compete with those who are nearer to market. Unless you do this, it means simply ruin to those who put their money in the soil.

AN HON. MEMBER: What do they do it for then?

MR. PIESSE: Another thing: we talk a great deal about the conservation of water for our goldfields; but what about conserving water in the arid country where our agriculturists are struggling to eke out a living, wrestling with the heavily timbered land, and clearing it for cultivation? Are these people not entitled to some consideration as well as the miners on our goldfields? Unless you do something to ameliorate the condition of the man who is struggling to settle himself on the soil, and to



make his life a happy one, by providing him with the necessary means to enable him to settle down in some comfort, and with some prospect of success, how can you expect him to develop the land? There is no doubt that the colony is making progress; and, being largely interested as I am in the colony, it is a pleasure to me to watch the advancement which it is making; at the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that we ought to do something to endeavour to make the prosperity general. It is no use continuing to do what we are doing now—simply helping one side to pauperise the colony, as we certainly shall do if we drive those who are on the soil off it. It is our duty to do something to try to keep the wealth that is raised from our soil within our own borders, and let our own settlers derive some benefit from it. If we want people to settle down in the colony we must give them every possible encouragement to do so. We know we have not the attraction that the other colonies possess, in the way of amusements and diversions of that kind, to make the place attractive, though I trust we are within measurable distance of the time when we shall be able to offer these attractions and inducements to people to make the colony their home. In the meantime everything we can do should be done to encourage people to settle on the land, and to cultivate it. The agricultural interests of the colony are, I am sure, second only in importance to its gold-mining interests. The hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) is always twitting me with looking very closely after the interests of the agricultural industry. I think I might retort by saying that the hon. member himself looks equally closely after the interests of the gold-mining industry, being largely interested in that industry. More power to him, I say. I am sure the hon. member earns what he wrestles from the soil, and earns it very hard, and deserves everything he can get in return. At the same time, I think our object should be to keep as much as we can of this golden harvest in the colony, by giving every possible encouragement and protection to our local producers. I would go in for out-and-out protection myself. Once I was a free trader, but I have become a protectionist of late. I have turned round and changed my opinion, like my friend

the hon. member for Albany does. With regard to His Excellency's Speech, there is not very much in it to remark upon, but I thought I might avail myself of the opportunity of ventilating my feelings with reference to my pet subject—agriculture. I trust members will pardon this digression on my part. With these remarks, I beg to second the Address-in-Reply.

MR. DEHAMEL: The Government asked the hon. member for the Williams to bless, but it seems to me he has risen rather to curse than to bless. The hon. member has told us one or two peculiar things. He has told us that protection is the best thing for the farmer, whereas the merest tyro in political economy knows that free trade, all the world over, is the best thing for the farmer, and that protection is good only for the artisan or to the mill-owner. Do we find the hon. member telling us these things from the point of view of the farmer? No. From the point of view of the mill-owner? Yes. I hope the day is far distant when the daily food of the people, out of which the hon. member makes a portion of his living, shall be taxed to such an extent as the hon. member, as a mill-owner, would like to see it taxed. We have also been told, and truly, that looking after our land is the great thing for us—the cultivation of the land. No doubt that is so, and that our goldfields are merely an incident. Unless we encourage our farmers—not by protection but by free trade—our goldfields will not have that beneficial effect which they otherwise would have upon the colony. The Speech tells us—and for this the Government are responsible—that the prospects of the colony are in every way satisfactory. It seems to me that the Government of this colony must go about like the ostrich with its head in the sand, when they put such a statement as that in the mouth of the Governor. Speaking for myself, I know that if you go from one end of the colony to the other you will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred you meet will tell you that the position and prospects of the colony were never worse, that money was never tighter, that the difficulty of providing food and other necessities was never greater than it is at the present moment. Go into any of our small towns, and see the houses and