

Mr. LOTON: As this is the first occasion of meeting of the new Parliament, and as the Speech we have had presented to us contains items of considerable magnitude and importance, and as very few members have had the opportunity which Ministers have had, and the two hon. members who have proposed and seconded the Address-in-Reply, of perusing the Speech previously, and, such being the desire of several members on this side of the House, I beg to move that the debate be adjourned. I do not know what day it will be convenient to adjourn it to, but as there seems to be no other business before us, I think we might adjourn the debate until Monday. I therefore move that the debate be now adjourned until Monday evening.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I think that the convenience of members living at a distance from Perth should be studied in this matter, and that this debate might be continued to-morrow and brought to a close, to avoid the necessity of country members returning here on Monday, when there is not likely to be any other business requiring their presence. So far as I am aware, there is nothing now before us but the Address-in-Reply and the temporary Supply Bill; and I should say we might get through the business if we meet again to-morrow. I think it is most unusual—I do not think we ever had an instance before of the debate on the Address-in-Reply being adjourned for so long as proposed by the hon. member for the Swan. We have always continued the debate on the following day, or the next sitting day of the House. For all that is contained in the Address-in-Reply on this occasion, or in the Speech itself, that is new to any of us, I think every member should be able to master it by to-morrow, otherwise he must be either very dense or very lazy.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Speech, although only just delivered, contains nothing that is very new, and I should like to have the Supply Bill passed before the end of the month, otherwise the Government will not be able to pay anybody. I am quite prepared, however, to meet the wishes of the House, though I should prefer to adjourn only till to-morrow instead of Monday.

Mr. R. F. SHOLL: I think it is very unusual to continue the debate on the

Governor's Speech without some interval for considering it. I expect the Government will be able to carry their Supply Bill without putting the hon. member for the DeGrey to the inconvenience of coming back on Monday. There are some very important subjects dealt with in His Excellency's Speech, and it is only right that members should have an opportunity of considering them.

Mr. CLARKSON: I shall oppose the motion to adjourn this debate until Monday. I must protest against these constant adjournments. It is all very well for town members who have nothing else to do; but there are several country members here whose convenience should be studied, and who cannot run up and down to Perth every day. I see nothing to prevent this debate being resumed to-morrow.

Mr. H. SHOLL: I think that country members are asking too much from Parliament. They will next want to be spoon-fed. I see no reason at all why the debate should not be adjourned until Monday.

Mr. PIESSE: I do not think this is a matter that should be turned into ridicule, as the hon. member for Roebourne has tried to do. I think the hon. member should take into consideration the convenience of country members, many of whom have travelled here to-day a long distance in order to be present at the opening of Parliament, and there will be no necessity for them to come back again on Monday if the business before us is disposed of to-morrow.

Mr. RANDELL: I think it would be very undesirable to continue the debate on the Address-in-Reply to-morrow. We could scarcely be prepared to resume the discussion so early as that, and as there is no sitting of the House on Friday or Saturday, I think the debate may well be adjourned until Monday. There is no necessity to hurry the matter. Although the Speech is not very long, and although the policy of the Ministry has been sketched out before by the Premier when addressing his constituents, yet it must be borne in mind that we have it before us now in print for the first time officially, as the policy decided on by the Government, and no change, I take it, can now take place in that policy, so far as the Government are concerned. There is no reason that I know of why we should hurry this debate. Some of us are unprepared.



MR. R. F. SHOLL: No, no; take the duty off flour.

MR. PIESSE: I don't intend to catch on to suit the hon. member for the Gascoyne, because that subject has been worn out. We have had enough of flour for the present. It seems to me the sons of Western Australia have been its greatest detractors. People in the North are constantly saying we cannot produce what the other colonies can send here; but let those settlers be patient, and let them give us in the South credit for good intentions and credit for producing a good article. But, with some of those Northern people, nothing will do unless it has been imported. The interests of farmers are the interests of the whole colony; and when this proposal of the Government for assisting farmers comes before us for consideration, I do hope that hon. members will give it due consideration. Although I congratulate the Government on the state of things in general, still I would like to mention a point with regard to a portion of their public works policy. It is not the first time I have mentioned this, and may not be the last. I refer to the design of some of our public buildings throughout the colony. In different parts little buildings are being put up which have cost enormous sums in comparison with their size, and it seems to me that whoever was responsible for the design of them must be a gentleman of the old school; for he has got the idea that our jarrah timber requires to be equal in size to the light pine wood used in England, and that therefore it is necessary to put in an equal quantity of heavy jarrah timber, and so increase the cost. Little school buildings, which might be put up for £200 or £300, are costing £500, through the want of local knowledge in requiring more timber to be put in than is necessary for the required strength. At Newcastle the same sort of mistake is visible, where a building is being pulled down to make room for another one. In my own district (the Williams), where the public buildings have been so costly in proportion to the size, the same thing is much remarked upon. It is only a matter of departmental arrangement, and I hope there will be some change in it. I hope also that, as time goes on, we shall see these

works of a minor nature carried out at less cost than they have been.

MR. RICHARDSON: Regarding the Speech as a whole, there is a lot of meaning in it expressed in a few words. We are attempting a further expenditure of a million and a half of money, and we are asked to give our views as to whether it is a wise policy, a bold policy, and a safe policy. I wish to remark that, with the exception of the hon. member for Albany, who has been somewhat direct in his opposition, and has gone in straight for opposing the whole thing, almost, and has said in plain language that he is opposed to further borrowing—with the exception of his speech, all the opposition we have heard to-night has been of a very qualified kind; and it would puzzle any one to gather from that opposition whether they approve of the Loan Bill or not. The hon. member for the Swan (Mr. Loton) started off pretty directly by opposing it, but ended up by approving of nearly the whole of it. He said it required consideration, and a lot of information, and a great deal of deliberation, before he could sanction this expenditure of money; but I have not heard him and other members on that side say which of these public works they are directly opposed to, or whether they are opposed to the whole thing. We must either say we do not consider the colony is in a position to borrow any further money, or, on the other hand, we must say there are public works that must be pressed on, and that we must assist the goldfields by developing the facilities of carriage. Then the responsibility comes on us, to say which of these works we ought to undertake, and which to reject. It is a serious consideration as to whether it is right and proper to borrow another million and a half, in present circumstances. As the hon. member for the Swan pointed out, if at the end of this proposed expenditure our population will have increased to 100,000 people, we will still have only 60 persons to every mile of constructed railway. That will be a large proportion of railways to so small a population; and if we can make our railways pay, under such circumstances, we may claim that, in regard to railway management, we shall almost have discovered the philosopher's stone. We have to consider also the comparatively light cost of constructing



railways in this colony; and from that point of view there is a great deal to be said in favour of making railways to places which could not otherwise be opened up. If we can find any silver lining to the cloud, I think we are justified in availing ourselves of it. When we look at the heavier cost of railways in other colonies as compared with the cost at which we construct our railways, there is very much in favour of our constructing railways through country which would not otherwise be opened up by this means at so early a period. A comparative statement of the cost of railway construction shows that in Great Britain the cost averages £29,000 to £30,000 a mile; in Scotland, about £18,000 a mile; in Ireland, about £15,000 a mile; and in America, which is held up as the country in all the world for cheap construction of railways, the average cost has been about £12,000 a mile. Coming now to Australian railways, the average cost in Victoria has been about £20,000, and so on with the other colonies. Therefore, when we are able to construct railways in this colony for something like £3,500 a mile, and equip them also within that cost, I think this comparative cheapness justifies us in constructing more mileage in proportion to population than would be considered practicable under other circumstances. That is one consideration which may help us to swallow these new proposals of the Government, more readily than we might otherwise be able to do. There is also the question of differential rates. We have been told, by the Government and by other persons, that the only justification for making railways to goldfields is that those who are interested in the mines will be prepared to pay a higher rate of freight than the ordinary railway rate. We are also told there is very little back freight from goldfields, and that in many cases a goldfield is an exhausting quantity; that a goldfield railway is very different from a railway through an agricultural country, where you know the products from the soil will go on increasing, whereas a goldfield is a kind of product that is gradually becoming exhausted; and as there is no back freight to carry from a goldfield, the Government say, wisely, that those persons who are paying £20 to £25 a ton for the carriage of machinery and supplies to gold-

fields by road should be satisfied if they get their goods carried for £5 to £8 a ton by railway. But we also want to know what hope there is that the Government will be able to maintain these differential rates on goldfields railways. I ventured to remark, a good many weeks before we had that deputation from Southern Cross to the Railway Commissioner, protesting against the higher rate of freights charged on the newly opened line, that I doubted whether any Government would be able to sustain that exceptional rate of charge, in the face of inevitable protests from a clamorous lot of gold-diggers, worked up into indignation at being charged more for the carriage of goods to goldfields than to other parts of the colony. What we want to know, at this stage of railway construction, is whether these extra high rates on goldfields lines are going to be charged or not, and whether these exceptional rates are to be put into a Bill, so that they may not be reduced under pressure, or are to be levied at the will of Ministers, who are prepared to stand their ground against the pressure and clamour of those who will want to reduce the rates. It is as well for this House to consider these new railways on the basis of the ordinary rates of freight, because although there is a great deal of justification for charging higher rates on goldfields lines, where there is no back loading, as not many ounces of gold will fill up the return trucks, and although this exceptional course may be unpopular as applied to goods, and I would not advocate any excessive charge for passenger traffic; still we must expect that the people who have to pay the higher rates of freight will not be satisfied to do so after they have got their railway opened, because it is human nature with miners, as with others, to object to exceptionally high rates, and to cry out for the lowest, and they will do so even though they were before paying £20 to £25 a ton, and are now getting their goods carried at 75 per cent. less. In that respect we are all alike. The hon. member for the Swan showed us the dark side of the question—[MR. LORON: The true side, not the dark side.]—I was going to add that I would show the dark side was not quite true in one respect. He said, very justly, that the additional



cost of these proposed railways would add to the debt of this colony at the rate of £20 per head of population, and that even if we got double the present population these works would add £10 per head. But the way I work out the sum shows that the cost of these works, added to our present indebtedness, will make the total amount about five millions, and the proportion will be about £66 per head of our present population, but if we double our population we shall have a proportionate indebtedness of only £33 per head, equal to one-half the larger amount. I wish also to point out a little discrepancy in a matter advocated by the hon. member for Yilgarn and the hon. member for Albany. The hon. member for Yilgarn said there is a great want of improved provisions for giving to miners the security of the fee simple of their tenure, in order that English capital may be introduced, because English investors are so accustomed to have a tangible security. I can understand that, quite well. It is reasonable. But, on the other hand, we had the hon. member for Albany advocating that, in the sale of these goldfields tenures, there should be perpetual leasing, and that the Government would, in course of time, have a wonderful amount of revenue from that source. [MR. LEAKE: Adopt my suggestion.] Well, these two methods of solving the same problem seem to me to conflict. I will venture to allude to the proposed Land Bank, and will shortly say I am not much inclined to be a full-hearted supporter of this proposal. I can see a lot of danger and difficulty; but at this stage I will only say that if Government loans are to be advanced to any class of persons in the community, secured on the permanent improvements of their lands, unless the system is fenced in with sufficient safeguards to take it out of the possibility of political pressure, and to make it not subject to what might be called political clamour, we should cautiously consider whether it is a wise measure or not. If, when the Bill is passed, it would be possible for the Government, or those who make the advances, to distinguish between Bill Brown and Tom Jones, or if, having lent to one, they do not lend to the other, and there are to be grievances and complaints in the newspapers, then we had better have nothing

to do with this lending of public money. Even with the Railways Department, if an officer is discharged, the heads of the department are subjected to all sorts of remarks in newspaper letters and by deputations; so that if, under this Land Bank scheme, the managers of it refuse a loan to certain individuals, and if for doing so they are to be subject to that kind of pressure, the less we have to do with it the better. But I do think that, if this scheme can be safeguarded in these directions, a certain amount of good may result from the measure. At the same time, I do not think the good will be anything like what is anticipated by some sanguine people; for although it may help a few individuals, and cause a little more cultivation of the soil, yet I do not think the good will be commensurate with the noise that is made about it. I have looked into the Credit Foncier system, as proposed lately in Victoria, and I see a great deal of danger attached to it, and think that, if the scheme be adopted there, its working will create considerable difficulty. That is my opinion. I regret to see a total absence from the Governor's Speech of any allusion to the Homesteads Act, and how it has been carried into effect; for I do not think that, after passing a measure which places the settler in the position that, instead of his having to pay 10s. an acre, spread over 10 or 20 years, the payment is reduced by one-half, and spread over 30 years—if such an inducement will not cause people to settle on the soil, I do not see how a loan of £200, and reducing the interest of it from eight to five per cent., will have the desired effect. All this talk about settling people on the land is like grasping at shadows, and neglecting perhaps more substantial things that are under their noses. I do believe, and in this I am borne out by my own experience and that of some practical members in this House, that if the present Homesteads Act were only taken in hand and worked practically, it would result in ten times more settlement than any Land Bank for lending money to settlers. I do hope the Government will be able to put the present Act on some better footing for promoting settlement. What amuses me very much is the nature of the objections to the Homesteads Act. We have one class of objec-



tors who say the conditions are too strict, and not liberal enough. I am alluding particularly to the homestead leases. Objectors say the conditions are too strict, and that those who took up the leases would have to spend too much money, and that the payments are too severe; therefore, people do not take up the runs. We can understand those objections as being reasonable and practical, because many hon. members on this (the Government) side of the House pointed out that this would probably be the cause of the failure. Then we have another class of objectors, who say the Act was only a squatters' Act, passed by a squatters' Parliament, for enabling squatters to convert their leaseholds into freeholds, that the country would be monopolised by the squatters, and that instead of an Act to promote the settlement of the land, we were going to have a lot of land monopoly. Well, the answer to that is that the predicted result has not happened, and I do not think it is likely to happen. Another class of objectors actually urge both these objections, and in doing so they inconsistently say these opposite causes are driving them away. However, if the Land Act be taken in hand and amended, by providing for selection before survey, instead of survey before selection, as was urged on the Premier when the Bill was before this House—if that part could be altered, I believe we should see such a revival of settlement of the lands as no Land Bank Bill will ever accomplish. In conclusion, I will say that I regret that this Speech, though it deals with the increase of revenue and the surplus, does not deal with the more important indications of our prosperity—I mean the imports and exports; for though we see a slight increase in our exports, and, though I am not croaking, there is an increase of £35,000 in the amount of our exports; yet, while we have an increase of nearly £200,000 in our wool and gold exports, there is a corresponding falling off of £160,000 in the value of the other exports of the colony. That is a large amount; but while £80,000 of the reduced total value of exports is accounted for by the less money value of the wool—though the quantity exported was greater—still that difference leaves some £80,000 of decrease in the other exports. I think

the decrease is to be found in our timber and pearlshell exports, and perhaps they are very important items. It is well that we should take a stern look at all these conditions, and not run away with the bit in our teeth, and think that because we have found a large amount of gold in the country, we may have no reverses. I do believe thoroughly in the sound position of the colony, and I think we can fairly challenge examination into our finances to prove it. But I like to look all round the question before sanctioning such a large addition to our debt as is contemplated. I hope that when we are dealing with the Loan Bill we shall not repeat the experience of the other colonies—that of losing their heads in a little prosperity. We must remember that even this gold which is being found in the country will not last for ever. We must remember that a great deal of our prosperity will be caused just by a rush of people into the country, and that when the alluvial deposits are exhausted, and we are thrown back on our permanent reefs, there may not be that wonderful increase in our population which we now anticipate. Although I am prepared to look at the Loan Bill as favourably as possible, there are some items in it I cannot swallow.

MR. THROSSELL: I think the majority of members must approve of the general policy of the Government. That policy must, to my mind, in the main, continue to be for some time to come a policy of development of the public estate—a public works policy; and so long as those public works are such as are likely to prove reproductive, such policy will command my support. With regard to the various works referred to in His Excellency's Speech, I notice with pleasure that provision is to be made for the construction of railways to the Coolgardie and Cue goldfields. Judging from all we hear of the wealth of these fields, such railways are called for, and will command my support. When the Premier brought forward his last Loan Bill, he said he hoped it would be a long time before he again entered upon a system of loans. At that time, however, I ventured to tell him his next Loan Bill would be for those very railways; and may we not rejoice that in so short a time these fields have so far developed as to be deemed,