

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE RE-DEDICATION.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill introduced to change the purpose of a section of a Class A Reserve, No. 378, being portion of Perth Suburban Lot 186, set apart for public buildings, and to dedicate such portion to the purpose of a church for the Seventh-Day Adventists, who at the present time have no site for a church, nor have they ever been granted a site. This is in accordance with the usual practice of granting a site to any church that applies for it. The reserve referred to is situated in Thomas Street, just off Hay Street, near the site of the Children's Hospital. I have a lithograph here to which members can refer if they chose. Those who know the locality will recollect the reserve at the corner of Hay and Thomas Streets. A small portion at the North-Western corner of that reserve, a portion of about a quarter of an acre in area, is to be taken off and granted to this denomination. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. G. Randell: Does it give a frontage to Hay Street?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; a frontage to Thomas Street.

Question passed; Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 7.47 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1907.

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

Prayers.

QUESTION—MINING SHIPMENTS, PHILLIPS RIVER.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What is the total tonnage of matte shipped from Phillips River during the past twelve months? 2, What was the value of the gold contents of same? 3, What was the total value of matte shipped?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, 2,085.80 tons. 2, £16,786. 3, £92,345. I may add that 12,307 tons were treated for twelve months ending October, 1907; average copper extracted approximately $6\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., estimate a loss of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., equals $7\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. as an average value.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE ACT, AS TO AMENDMENT.

Mr. WALKER asked the Premier: Is it the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill amending the Public Service Act?

The PREMIER replied: If time will permit, a short amending Bill dealing with the constitution of the appeal board will be submitted.

BILL—BUNBURY HARBOUR TRUST COMMISSION.

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Report of Chief Harbour Master to 30th June, 1907.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of the Greenmount Road Board. 2, By-laws of the Balingup Road Board. 3, Scale of poundage fees made by the Irwin Road Board.

BILL—PUBLIC HEALTH.

Second Reading moved.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): In moving the second reading of the Health Bill, I need hardly point out to members the great length of the measure; and though I may express regret that it has not come here earlier for consideration, yet I feel sure that in view of its importance it will be treated with due deliberation by this House. The Health Act, which was passed in 1898, has been amended in 1900, 1902, 1904 and 1906, with a view to bringing it up to date; and the Bill now before us is not only a consolidation of these amending Acts, but contains many improvements taken from the statutes of New Zealand and Queensland. Since 1898, when our existing Act was passed, there have been throughout the world great advances in legislation for the improvement of the public health, and in Western Australia we are somewhat behind the Eastern States; hence the effort now being made to bring our legislation up to date. The Bill, though as I have said it is very long, has been drafted with considerable care; and moreover the Legislative Council, through which the measure has passed, referred it to a select committee consisting of the Colonial Secretary (Hon. J. D. Connolly), who has charge of all health matters in this State, the Hon. G. Randell, who for many years was Colonial Secretary administering the Health Department, the Hon. W. Kingsmill, who as members know was also for many years Colonial Secretary, the Hon. J. W. Langsford, who has had much experience of municipal matters both as mayor and councillor, and the Hon. J. W. Wright, for many years a member of the Central Board of Health. These gentlemen took the evidence of witnesses from

many portions of the State, including the goldfields. Witnesses of various trades and professions were examined, and consideration was given also to the suggestions made at the municipal conference. No effort was spared to obtain the most complete evidence that could possibly be adduced with a view to passing through another place a satisfactory measure. Having passed the Legislative Council the Bill is now here for us to deal with, and I hope we shall so deal with it that we may be able in the short time at our disposal to pass it into law. The Bill contains very large and drastic powers. [Mr. Angwin: For the central board.] Certainly for the central board; and I think it wise to give those powers to the central board. We have had some experience of the difficulties with which the central board are confronted when local authorities are lax with health administration within their own areas, and when the central board have not those powers which I think they should have with a view to compelling one portion of Western Australia to refrain from being a menace and danger to every other portion. I think we are quite justified in giving large powers to the central board, so as to have health matters placed on a better basis than they have occupied on many occasions in the past. Much of course depends on the administration; and I regard the administrative clauses as the principal clauses in the Bill. [Mr. Collier: They are everything.] Under our existing Act we have a central board under the Minister, and we have local boards, some of which consist of municipal councils while others are nominee boards. It is a matter for our serious consideration whether the control of the Health Department should be entirely Ministerial, or whether we should grant some authority to local boards as suggested in an hon. member's interjection. In ordinary circumstances I should be inclined to say that the Health Department should be absolutely controlled by a Minister. But we have to consider the conditions under which we live, and compare them with conditions in other States where the control is entirely Ministerial. [Mr. Angwin: Say Queensland.] Take, for instance,

New Zealand, a small country, where the population is not scattered, and where great facilities exist for Ministerial control. That is the New Zealand system, and there I think it gives the best results. But in a country like Western Australia, with the difficulties which lie in the way of departmental administration, I think the procedure suggested in the Bill now before us will be far better than absolute Ministerial control. In Victoria there is a central board consisting of nine members. Two of them are nominated, and the seven are elected by the various health authorities throughout the State. Their powers are very similar to those prescribed in this Bill; but the central board have not the authority which the Bill will give to our own central board. New South Wales has a central board composed of seven to eleven members—an entirely nominee board, controlled by the Minister. Ordinarily the municipal bodies carry out health work within the municipalities; and outside municipalities that work is carried on by the police. Many of the clauses are taken from the Queensland Act. In that State there is a commissioner who has great powers. There is in addition an advisory board nominated by the Governor, but the commissioner is entirely controlled by the Minister. Members will find even in this Bill in connection with appeals that the Minister or the Governor-in-Council has the complete powers of a court of appeal over the Central Board. In South Australia there is a Central Board consisting of five members, three of whom are nominated and two elected. In Tasmania the work is almost wholly departmental. In the large centres of that State the Health Act is carried out by departmental officers; but outside of those places advantage is taken of nominee boards and, in some instances, of town boards; they are controlled, however, by the department. In New Zealand the work is entirely departmental; thus the Minister controlling the Act appoints medical officers, inspectors, etcetera, and carries out all matters in connection with health affairs. [Mr. Bath: But working through the local authorities.] I understand that the work there is en-

tirely departmental. In this new Bill we propose to continue the Central Board as at present, but the local administration is somewhat altered from what it has been in the past. Under the old Act we had municipal councils and nominee boards; under this Bill the municipal council becomes, by virtue of the provisions of the Bill, the local authority for the municipal area. The roads boards will also be local authorities, but I desire to impress on members that it is not the intention of the department when appointing roads boards as local authorities to deal with health matters to give them in every case control over the whole roads boards area. The idea is that the area to be controlled by the local authorities should be as small as possible. At present the roads boards deal with very large areas, and probably in a case where the area is scattered the board would be unable to give the residents certain necessary facilities, such as proper sanitary arrangements and a thorough inspection; consequently, it is proposed in cases where neither a municipal council nor a roads board could be appointed satisfactorily to act as a local authority in any one district, that nominee boards should be appointed. In each instance, however, where it is possible, it is desired to try and have the local authority under the Bill an elective body. It will only be in cases where there are large roads board districts and where the work could not be carried out as thoroughly as is necessary that nominee boards will be appointed. Another very important matter in regard to the administration is that having reference to the officers appointed by the various local authorities. It is said by the officers of the department that it is not wise to give to the local authorities power to dismiss their employees or reduce their salaries without the permission of the Central Board. It seems to me rather an anomaly, at the first blush, that the local authority who pay the salaries of officers should not be able to decide as to keeping a certain inspector in their employ, and that the Central Board should have the right of deciding whether he should be dismissed or not. However, the argument of the Central Board is that

there have been instances where inspectors desirous of doing their duty have been influenced by influential personages, and that there has been a certain amount of wire-pulling.

Mr. Angwin: Will you give evidence of this?

The MINISTER: I have no evidence.

Mr. Collier: It is true all the same.

The MINISTER: It would be hard indeed to bring evidence on a matter of this kind. I have only told the hon. member that officers of the department have advised that instances have been reported to them where efforts have been made, either by threatening the inspectors or by other means, to prevent them from being too inquisitorial. The suggestion has been made that if these inspectors do their duty as they should, they will be dismissed or reduced in salary. It is therefore thought that in matters of this kind the Central Board should have the control. If members will seriously consider the position they will recognise that perhaps cases might arise where persons having considerable influence and a great deal of property in a township might be able to bring influence against an inspector, if the latter were too inquisitorial as to the backyards of that influential person.

Mr. Daglish: What about the man who might influence the Central Board?

The MINISTER: There would not be the same opportunities.

Mr. Daglish: I should think there would be.

The MINISTER: I hope there would be less possibility of bringing influence to bear on a board which is responsible to the Government for carrying out its duties rather than on a poor unfortunate inspector who is receiving a very small salary. Surely the influence on the latter would be much greater and more likely to be attempted than on the former.

Mr. Daglish: It is brought on the local boards.

The MINISTER: The hon. member knows what influence can be wielded by one or two persons having large interests in a community. Anyhow, that is the argument brought forward by the Central Board, and their desire is to render the position of the individuals more

secure. It is also provided in the Bill that inspectors must qualify for positions on the boards. For some time past the Central Board have been giving special facilities by means of an elaborate course of lectures by departmental officers. They desire that inspectors should be compelled to qualify, and to show that they have a knowledge in hygiene and ordinary health work, and also on the legislation contained in this Bill.

Mr. Daglish: Why should not the members of the Central Board qualify?

The MINISTER: There is a professional medical officer at the head of the department, and he would be possessed of the scientific knowledge necessary, and I presume the members of the board would provide all the practical knowledge required for carrying out the work. With regard to the Central Board, if members are not satisfied with the present method of appointing that body, they will be able to explain some easier method of appointment when the Bill is farther advanced. The Minister has power to permit inspectors to be appointed who are not qualified, for it is not necessary that in every little outside district an inspector should possess these qualifications. It is important, however, that in the larger districts the inspectors should be fully qualified to carry out their duties. With regard to appeals from the decision of a local authority, at the present time, except in a few details, there is no power given to the Central Board to review any action of the local authority. It is essential that power should be given for an appeal to an unprejudiced body, and greater power of appeal to the Central Board from the local authority is given under this Bill than is provided under the Act. Members will see that under Section 77 the Minister has conferred on him all the powers of the Central Board, so there is a farther power to appeal to, other than the Central Board. There is a certain clause which might be adversely criticised, especially by metropolitan members; that is Clause 39, which provides for joint officers for certain districts. In the opinion of the department this is a very valuable clause.

Mr. Angwin: No one else holds that opinion.

The MINISTER: I did not think the hon. member would agree to that clause, but there is no doubt that it will lead to great economies. In the metropolitan area, from Perth to Fremantle, there are now 24 local authorities, each of which has its own medical officer, inspector or inspectors, and analyst, and it must be admitted that by this means a heavy expenditure is caused. The suggestion is that the duties of these officers would be carried out by a few special men. This would conduce not only to better administration than at present, but also to great economies. At present the sum of £2,500 is paid to inspectors alone, while in addition there is between £400 and £500 to analysts, and the fees to the medical officers. Many inspectors make £10, £15 or £20 a year by carrying out the duties of health officer as well. They also have many other functions, and in many cases they know very little about health matters. The Central Board of Health think it would be wise that they should have power to appoint the officers needed by the local authorities, to assign duties to them, and see that officers pass the requisite examinations. They say, for instance, firstly that one highly qualified medical man would be able to carry out the whole of the duties in that area, provided he were a specialist, instead of, as at present, there being half-a-dozen medical men who make no pretence of being specially qualified to deal with health matters. Under present conditions, medical officers receive but a small sum annually for carrying out the duties, and they are too often rather careless in regard to the provisions of the Health Act. It is felt that it would be preferable to have one specialist whose duty it should be to act as medical officer for the whole of that area. The health inspectors also might be appointed in a similar manner, and their duties assigned to them by a central authority. These health officers and inspectors would then all be experts. I am sure also that in so far as analysts are concerned, members will admit at once that it would be wiser to have one qualified analyst to perform all the duties

required in such area, than as at present to pay a guinea to an analyst in one case, and sending the next analytical work to another analyst who has to be specially paid. If this clause be passed, as I hope it will, I venture to say it will have good results; and although it might be difficult, if not impossible, to get all the local authorities to agree as to the appointment of any particular officer for the metropolitan area, I think the proper course would be to ask the local authorities to meet and agree to the appointment of certain officers. The Central Board would of course confer with the local authorities; but if we pass the clause, we must give to the Governor-in-Council power to make the appointments; otherwise the clause might be useless. Those are the principal administrative clauses; and now I do not purpose to deal at length with the other provisions of the measure, because it would take too long to refer to all the provisions and the extensive powers comprised in the Bill. [*Mr. Angwin:* None are given to local authorities.] If the hon. member will read the Bill, he will find many powers are given to local authorities which will be appreciated. [*Mr. Angwin:* They don't want them, anyhow.] Many provisions in the Bill have been recommended by the department for a long time; and it has been recognised by successive Governments that farther statutory provisions are required for the purpose of protecting the safety, the health, and the food supplies of the people. I say this Bill is necessary; and though there may be some few clauses that will not meet with the approval of all members, the Bill is essential for the welfare of the people of the State. In addition to the clauses dealing with administration, there are provisions in the Bill dealing with finance, sanitation, dwellings, nuisances, offensive trades, abattoirs, food inspection, noxious diseases, protection of infant life, and many other matters. The clauses dealing with finance are very similar to those in the present Act. Slightly increased powers are given under Clause 37 to local boards, who may, with the ap-

proval of the Governor-in-Council, increase the health rate in special circumstances from 6d. to 9d. in the pound. It is believed this power to increase the health rate should be given in very special cases. Many instances have been pointed out where it has been necessary, if a sudden outbreak of disease occurred, to make an increase in the rate for meeting the special expenditure, so as to put the finances of the local board in order. Therefore under the Bill, local authorities are given power to increase the health rate up to 9d. in the pound, but only with the special approval of the Governor-in-Council. The borrowing powers conferred in the Bill are given only to municipal councils and roads boards, so that only elective bodies are to have power to borrow for health purposes. Members may look askance at this proposal to give power to local authorities to borrow money for health purposes; but past experience has shown it to be absolutely necessary in certain conditions. For instance, when the Kalgoorlie municipality took over the sanitary business, they had to provide a large sum of money for the purpose. I do not know exactly how they financed the matter—I think they arranged with a bank.

Mr. H. Brown: No; on the general rate.

The MINISTER: I think they gave bills to pay for the sanitary plant, providing for payment by instalments.

Mr. Angwin: They have borrowing powers under the Municipalities Act?

The MINISTER: Can the hon. member tell me under which clause?

Mr. Angwin: The power was in the old Act; I cannot say where it is in the new Act.

The MINISTER: This has been described to me as a new power given to local authorities. I may mention another instance in which this power has been found necessary. The Albany municipal council recently took over the sanitary work, and found it necessary to borrow money for providing plant. They borrowed £800 from the Government in connection with that matter. This power to borrow money should be given to local bodies for health purposes, as in their

early stages and especially where work previously done privately or by contract is taken over by the local authority, the expenditure of a considerable sum is necessary to start the work. The sanitary provisions of the Bill are very similar to the present law; but there are special provisions dealing with drainage. These are necessary, more particularly in connection with the metropolitan area. I may point out that when the new Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act is proclaimed, the provisions herein dealing with drainage, so far as the metropolitan area is concerned, will be superseded by that Act. In connection with ordinary sanitary business, the present Act does not apply to any tenement of less value than 15s. per month rental; but under the Bill all tenements, irrespective of rental value, must be provided with proper sanitary conveniences if the buildings are tenanted. There is another new power conferred by the Bill in relation to dwellings. At present, though the Central Board of Health has power to condemn buildings as unfit for habitation, it has no power to order the demolition of buildings so condemned, and these frequently become a nuisance to a district. Under the Bill the Central Board will have power not only to condemn a building, but also to issue instructions that such building shall be demolished. Boarding-houses under this Bill, must be registered. Under the existing Act it is provided only that lodging-houses shall be registered and examined; but under the Bill any house used for boarders is to be deemed a boarding-house if not fewer than six people board in it. The ordinary household taking in a single boarder will not be held to be a boarding-house; but when the average number of boarders exceeds five, the house must be registered as a boarding-house and be regularly inspected by health inspectors. This I think is a wise provision, because the ordinary boarding and lodging-houses are places which require regular attention, to see they are conducted with proper regard to health.

Mr. Heitmann: What about houses in which there are four or five in the family?

The MINISTER: The provision refers to boarders, not to the number of a family. Air space is already provided for. When keepers of boarding-houses are catering for the public, it is necessary these houses should be subject to inspection; but even the hon. member would not suggest that this should be insisted on where only the members of a family reside in the house.

Mr. Heitmann: Their health is still an important matter.

The MINISTER: A new feature in the Bill is the provision as to public abattoirs. As members know, we are building abattoirs at Kalgoorlie and at Fremantle; and it is thought desirable to have power to enforce proper supervision and inspection of meat. Under present conditions, as is well known, persons slaughter here, there, and everywhere. In many instances slaughter-houses are miles apart, making it a difficult matter to properly supervise the meat coming from the different slaughter-houses. The recent revelations or statements made in Kalgoorlie, even though not entirely borne out by fact, make one think how essential it is there should be more complete supervision of meat supplies than in the past. The provision here made in this respect will, I think, be universally approved, not only by members but by the public generally. In regard to food inspection, the present Act is very defective, and members will agree it is time we brought forward legislation dealing with the sale of food. It has been intended by successive Governments for years passed to legislate in regard to this matter, and legislation has been previously brought before this Chamber, which unfortunately was not passed. It is essential now we should legislate in respect to this important matter. The Central Board advises that the variety of food adulterants is astonishing; and analysis shows that some articles contain as much as 75 per cent. of adulteration, especially in foods for children. Members must recognise that this is a matter which not only touches the people's health but also their pockets; for when a person purchases an article adulterated to the extent of 75 per cent., and pays for it the price asked for the genuine article,

the loss is particularly large. The people most affected by food adulteration are the poorer classes of the community. The principal food adulteration has been found in foods made up specially for children; and if these are adulterated, it follows they will have less nutritive qualities than by their labels they may be expected to contain; the result being that considerable injury must be done to child-life in this State if these improper foods are permitted to be sold here. Members will notice that extensive powers are given to local authorities to make by-laws dealing with the sale of food; and in considering these drastic powers members will recognise how essential it is that experts having special knowledge of the work should be appointed to the position of inspectors. Then dealing with dairies and the supply of milk there are new provisions which will be found acceptable to the community. Under our present Act the local authority of each district in which the dairyman vends milk can charge a registration fee of one pound, but under this Bill the fee of £1 need only be paid to the first local authority he registers with, and half a crown to the local authority of any other district where he vends milk.

Mr. Underwood: How long do you give him for selling adulterated milk?

The MINISTER: In the first instance the penalty is £20 maximum; for the second offence it is £50. There is special provision that the minimum penalty must not be less than 10 per cent. of the maximum penalty, so that the minimum for the first offence is £2 and the minimum for the second offence is £5.

Mr. Underwood: You make no provision for putting him in gaol.

The MINISTER: I do not know; I would not be certain; but I think there is special provision in some circumstances where we do give the power to put a man in gaol. One needs to be very careful in regard to these penalties, because it may not always be the fault of the vendor. Take the case of one who is retailing milk and employs a dishonest man who sells the milk in bulk to one person and adds water to the balance to make it up.

We make it an offence in the Bill if a man carries a tin of water on the cart.

Mr. Taylor: The Bill does not put the adding of water on the same footing as other adulterations.

The MINISTER: No. The standard quality of milk is distinctly defined, but if the vendor puts water in the milk and it goes beyond that standard, he is liable to the penalties I have just mentioned. There is provision by which the employee who is fined for selling adulterated milk has power to come on his employer for having placed the water there first. It all depends upon who has done it as to who is to be convicted in regard to this matter. I was saying that if any person vending milk is found to have any can or receptacle on his cart in which he carries water, it is held to be an offence.

Mr. Gull: That goes too far. He may require to carry water to wash his dipper.

The MINISTER: Then we can compel him to have his dipper washed at his customer's house. No customer would refuse to allow a milk vendor to wash his dipper if he so desires. In regard to our food supply, under the present Act it is found that unless it is proved that food is absolutely unwholesome, an offence cannot stand in a law court. Under present conditions also though people are supposed to affix labels showing what the main ingredients are, they put the main ingredients in bold type showing it clearly to the buyer, while in small letters, probably at the bottom of the label, they announce that it is composed of various articles. This Bill provides that the label must be approved and that it must be clearly shown to the customer whether it is a compound and what the ingredients are. The standard of purity in connection with these foods can be fixed by regulation, and once that standard is fixed any person selling foods at a lower standard will be liable for an offence. We can also make regulations for the size and wording of the labels, and so as to give full power to provide that when the public are purchasing goods the seller shall be compelled to give to the customers the class of goods the customers presume they are buying. There is also a provision

that no person suffering from an infectious disease shall be employed in any capacity in connection with any industry where the manufacture of foods is being carried on. For instance, some person who is suffering from consumption may be employed. If any such person is so employed the inspector has power to have him removed from the factory immediately. We must all recognise the danger of any such person being employed where foods are being manufactured. I think this clause will be found a particularly good one, though I do not suppose that in any circumstances an employer of labour would knowingly employ any such person. However it is a good thing, when we are having inspection, that the inspectors should have the power to remove those persons. There is a long list of clauses dealing with patent medicines.

Mr. Taylor: Has it made any arrangements for rheumatic cures?

The MINISTER: I do not know, but if I hear of one I shall send it to the hon. member straight away. The department say that many patent medicines are no good, that they are absolutely worthless, and that some are positively harmful.

Mr. Taylor: That is right, I have tried a few of them.

The MINISTER: When the Bill was originally framed it was provided that all these patent medicines before they could be sold here should be registered with the Central Board of Health, and that there should be a disclosure of the constituent ingredients of which the patent medicines are manufactured; but the select committee after taking evidence and going exhaustively into the matter thought it wise to condemn this clause; they did not think good results would follow.

Mr. Bath: Was that a Legislative Council select committee?

The MINISTER: Yes. That was the committee that went thoroughly into this question. They did not think it wise that this clause should stand and they amended it, but under the amendment I think they have given full power to deal with these medicines, power to refuse to allow any patent medicine to be put on the market. The committee think that is

a useful power. If the Central Board consider that any patent medicine placed on the market is unwholesome or injurious to health, they will have the power in the future to prevent its sale within the State.

Mr. Collier: The Federal Parliament are also dealing with the question of patent medicines.

The MINISTER: Yes, that is in regard to their importation. There may be many medicines manufactured in the State equally injurious with those imported. The Federal Parliament deal with the question of the importation into the State. We want power to deal with the class of medicines that will be retailed in the State. One may get formulas and recipes and make up some patent medicines or drugs which may be deleterious to the public health. So the Central Board will have power to condemn any such patent medicines.

Mr. Angwin: Do you give them notice to get rid of their stocks?

The MINISTER: I do not think that would do, if it was found the medicine was injurious to public health.

Mr. Angwin: Then you have altered your opinion.

The MINISTER: I do not think in any circumstances they would allow such a medicine to continue being sold. Any measure that would allow an article injurious to public health to continue to be sold would be extremely unwise. I do not think there was any such provision as that indicated by the hon. member in the first Bill. I have perused it.

Mr. Angwin: You said previously it should be done.

The MINISTER: I said the board should have power to stop the sale. In regard to infectious diseases, in 1906 some special clauses were passed dealing with these, and all the powers of the present Act in this respect have been preserved. Rigorous powers are no doubt necessary. They may be somewhat harsh at times on certain persons, but allowing consumptive patients to remain in a thickly populated community is undoubtedly very injurious to health, and we need to have drastic powers indeed in dealing with cases of that

sort so as to prevent contamination. We provide here that where infectious diseases break out in any district power is given for the payment of compensation when property is destroyed. That is in Clause 222. Then there is special provision in regard to the reporting of these diseases. The doctor in the first instance must report to the householder and it is the householder's duty to report to the local authority. In boarding-houses, lodging houses, or in private houses, once the doctor reports any infectious disease it is the duty of the householder to immediately report to the local authority, and the doctor also has to report to the local authority, and there are penalties for non-compliance in either case. Then there are special provisions dealing with infant life protection. There is at present a Bill before this House dealing with the protection of infant life; but we want also to move in line with that Bill and to have special provisions dealing with food supplied to infants, special care being taken in regard to these foods, and we want special provisions in the Bill for the registration of midwives. There are certain powers given to the Governor-in-Council to declare that in certain districts certain provisions of the Act need not apply, for instance in regard to dairies and probably in regard to midwives. In remote districts there is probably not the same necessity for registration as there is in larger centres. Then there are clauses dealing with school hygiene. Hon. members know that Dr. Blackburne has been going through the schools medically examining children, but at present we have no legal power to carry on that work. I do not think there is any doubt but that the work is a particularly good work. It has been much appreciated, and I think it is work that should be continued, but if we are going to continue it we should have legal authority to do it. That completes the list of notes I have taken of the Bill itself. When we get into Committee, and I hope I shall be allowed to go into Committee on the measure, I shall be able to give particulars of any new provision introduced into the Bill. The draft of the Bill which I

have had given to me contains various notes about the new provisions. Where there has been any departure from the present Act I shall be only too pleased to mention it to members, and if there is anything of a special nature I shall take good care that it is pointed out to members. The Bill is an exceedingly lengthy one, and I regret I have not had time to properly give it consideration. There are 300 clauses.

Mr. Angwin: We shall have to make the time.

The MINISTER: There are a good many members who are anxious to see the Bill become law, and for the benefit of the public generally I hope unwise counsels will not prevail, and that members will appreciate the good things in the measure rather than throw out the Bill because there are one or two provisions which they do not care for. There are a lot of provisions in the Bill dealing with the food supplies of the public, and there are special provisions which it is essential there should be local authority to control. The Bill deals with the health of the community generally, and I am sure members will give me all the assistance they can in passing it into law. The Bill does not come under my department, but I have perused it carefully and I hope members will give me all the assistance they can in passing it. I hope it will become law.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): As the Minister has pointed out in regard to this measure there is very great necessity for an amendment of our health legislation, but I am very much afraid the form in which the Bill has been submitted, and judging by the objections which have been taken, especially by the local authorities in the State and those in touch with the local authorities who are members of the House, the Bill is likely to have a somewhat protracted passage. I have come to the conclusion in regard to the public health legislation, if it were possible to divide it into two measures, one dealing with administration and one dealing with the clauses which refer more particularly to what may be termed the scientific phases of the Bill, the work of the Minister in charge would be greatly facili-

tated. Practically the whole of the objections to the Bill on the score of administration range round the respective boards nominated by the central authority and the local authorities. I remember when the Bill which was introduced by the member for Mount Margaret was before the House in 1904 that was precisely the same question which cropped up on which great diversity of views was expressed by members of the House at that time, especially by the medical gentlemen who were examined by the select committee and who were also members of the House. It appears to me the mistake made in the present Bill has been in the direction of granting too large powers to the central authority, and to a very large extent the local authorities are practically snubbed by the measure. I am not going to say that it should be left entirely to local authorities to look after our health administration, especially as I recognise there are matters outside any individual authority which should be controlled by some central board. I pin my faith to the provision in the 1904 Bill in the direction of a body of more modest dimensions to look after what may be safely left to the central board. If we had two or at most three as the members of the central administration we would be going far enough. I am not so wedded to the principle of having even a medical officer as the head of the department. I believe we should have a man with a wider outlook on health affairs, one for preference who is well versed not only in sanitary engineering, but in the scientific work which inspectors are called on to perform throughout the various parts of the world where it has been given prominence to. If such an officer were appointed and assisted by a medical man who was a bacteriologist I think we would have a sufficient staff as far as the central board was concerned to control the matter in Western Australia. The framers of the measure evidently have adopted this principle. They practically said it is unsafe to leave health administration to the local authorities, and we should give them only a minimum of power in that direction, and take a greater proportion of the powers for the central organisation. I think it would

be infinitely better to organise the local authorities as far as possible and hand over to them the powers of administration, and only call on the central board to supervise them. We can never hope to have effective administration of the health laws by local authorities until we first give them an opportunity of exercising them, no more than we can have a competent carpenter until we give him the tools to ply his trade. While I recognise there are and have been local authorities in Western Australia who have neglected the powers placed in their hands in connection with health matters, it has not been due to any defect in the principle of having local authorities to carry these on, but rather has it been due to the constitution of those authorities. It has been pointed out by the Minister, and in my experience it is correct, that the central authority has had to intervene where the local authority has not carried out the powers in a proper manner; but that is due to the fact that we give property owners, the very people who are interested in preventing the good administration of the health laws practically the dominant power in choosing the local authority, and thus indirectly choosing their inspectors, those who carry out the administration of the health laws. If we adopt the course here as elsewhere in Great Britain and the Continent of basing the franchise for local authorities more democratically we would have greater interest by the people as a whole, and consequently we would have better sanitation and better health regulations under the local authorities, and there would be no need to rely to the same extent on the central authority. Therefore it would be preferable, instead of arming the somewhat cumbersome central authority as proposed under the Bill with very large powers, to have a department of health, practically responsible to the Minister, with a minimum number of members of that board necessary to look after the public health of the State. I notice that by virtue of being a municipality a municipal council is constituted a local authority under the Bill, and roads boards can only be so constituted by being

gazetted by the Governor-in-Council. This places the two local authorities who have practically or very nearly equal powers, especially in health administration or in responsibility, on a different basis so far as the Bill is concerned. That is the reason why very often a municipal council can carry on more effectively than a roads board. It is only when a town reaches to a certain stage, when the rateable value of the property within its boundaries has reached to a fairly substantial stage, that the residents ever ask that a municipality be constituted; while a roads board which has not these same advantages, the population being more scattered, is still called on to do every bit as important work in administration in various directions as a municipal council is; and the Bill should have placed a roads board in precisely the same position as a municipal council, giving it equal authority under the Health Act. In connection with some of the clauses there seems to be a desire to deal tenderly with the property owner, while responsibility is placed on the person who is the occupier. There is a provision by which the Government or the local authority have power to compel an owner or occupier to fill up low-lying land. There is a possibility that this may work hardship on the occupier. The local authority can come along and say, "You must fill up this land," and the occupier under the provision which provides that he may be fined if he does not do it, may be compelled to fill up the land and embark on the expense necessary, and his only resource is to initiate legal proceedings against the owner. He may be able to secure it in that direction, but many people dislike to initiate legal proceedings, and then he would be involved in expense which perhaps may not be recouped to him under the provision. I think the effort of the department and the effort of the Bill should be to place the responsibility on the shoulders of the owner who has the profit of the property, whatever accrues, receipts and rents from it; he should be the person in first resort who should be tackled by the health authorities in order to enforce the conditions of the Bill. I am pleased to say we have in the

Bill more elaborate and drastic provisions for dealing with the sale of food and drinks. But I should like to point out to the Minister in charge that even with the limited powers he has under existing health legislation much more could be done by effective administration. Very seldom do we read of proceedings taken against importers of food and drugs unfit for human consumption; and yet, from what we know of investigations pursued locally, in the Eastern States, and in other parts of the world, adulteration is growing alarmingly, and what is needed in addition to the provisions of the Bill is more effective administration, a closer watch on the importers of these articles, and more frequent prosecutions. I think that the great bulk of the drugs and patent medicines used in this State is made in America; and the revelations regarding the component parts of these articles are startling in the extreme. I have here some particulars obtained from an official source showing the adulteration which goes on in America; and we must recognise that a great quantity of these goods finds its way into this as well as other States of the Commonwealth. The writer of this book states that the information secured is sufficient to "stagger humanity." Regarding coffee compounds, he states:—

"Of eleven samples of these mixtures analysed by the Pennsylvania department in 1897-98 six contained no coffee whatever, and none contained more than 25 per cent. The contents ranged from pea hulls 64 per cent. in one instance to bran and the husks of cocoa beans. The Ohio reports contain similar testimony. One interesting sample, analysed in 1900, showed ingredients in the following percentages: sand, 7.59; sticks, wood, and husks, 2.59; whole coffee beans, 5.93; beans resembling coffee, 12.10; pods, 1.56; cracked coffee grains and foreign matter, 70.21.

He goes on to deal with cream of tartar, and makes remarks rather too strong to read to hon. members. But he proceeds:—

"The cream tartar of commerce, under the analysis of the chemists, is likely to turn out to be anything within

a wide range running from pure bicarbonate of soda to a mixture of starch, calcium, phosphate acid, and gypsum. Equally deceptive are the flavouring extracts. Vanilla essence is often made from tonka beans, artificial coumarin, and glycerole, while lemon essence seems to be produced from whatever comes handiest to the fabricator. Professor R. E. Doolittle, in his address before the Portland Pure Food Convention, gave the following summary of his investigations in this matter:—"A few months ago I had the inspectors secure samples of the different brands of lemon extracts for sale in the State. Something like a hundred samples have been received up to date. Of the 86 so far analysed, 44 show no oil of lemon, or at least not enough for estimation; only eight are above five per cent., and all except six are coloured with some foreign colouring matters, almost all of which are coal-tar dyes. As you are all aware, the extract, spirit, or essence of lemon of the United States Pharmacopœia is a five per cent. solution (by volume) of the oil of lemon in strong alcohol, coloured with lemon peel."

On the subject of patent medicines my authority writes:—

"Violations of the laws or ordinances against the sale of poisons appear to be general; and while these are not, strictly speaking, instances of graft, they are at least instances of the assertion of trading-class interest in defiance of public interest. Much more to the point are the concocting and sale of patent medicines, practically all of which are grafts, and the frequent substitutions of wood (or methyl) alcohol for ethyl alcohol, and acetanilid for phenacetin. 'Methyl alcohol,' says the latest report of the New York State Board of Pharmacy, 'is commonly recognised to be a very dangerous poison.' Taken internally, it is known to have caused St. Vitus's dance, paralysis, and total blindness. Even when used externally, as in certain liniments and tinctures, it is exceedingly harmful. Yet in 1903, Dr. Lederle, then the head of the New York City Health Depart-

ment, found that some forty druggists were using it, not only in spirits of ammonia, but in tinctures of ginger. Acetanilid is generally regarded as a very dangerous heart depressant. Its price, however, is low—about 25 cents. a pound wholesale—and it thus admirably conduces to the making of profit as a substitute for phenacetin. Dr. Lederle's statement of January 14, 1903, showed that of 373 samples of alleged phenacetin purchased from druggists in Manhattan and Brooklyn, 315 were found to be adulterated or to be composed entirely of substances other than phenacetin."

He goes on to give many details of the drugs used in the preparation of patent medicines. In some of them, alcohol made of substances which render it positively dangerous to the community is availed of. These drugs are sold wholesale, and great volumes find their way in various guises into Western Australia and other parts of the Commonwealth. From this members will see the absolute necessity for provisions such as we have in this Bill, enabling the authorities to prohibit the sale of such medicines; and I much regret that the select committee of another place opposed the inclusion of a provision making it compulsory for the composition of these patent medicines either to be revealed to the Public Health Department or revealed to the public by printing the contents of the bottles on the labels. The Federal Government have some such provision, but from what I can gather it is not being enforced. People who concoct these poisons in other parts of the world have brought strong pressure to bear, and have made much use of the cry that the Federal law was injuring capital and preventing it from entering the country.

The Minister for Mines: I think the Federal Government ascertain the component parts, but keep them secret. I am not sure.

Mr. BATH: I am satisfied that no person who manufactures and puts up a patent medicine should have any reason for being afraid to make its composition known. If such manufacturers are to be considered before the health of this or any other community—if the people are to

buy what may be termed a pig in a poke—it is time we took some drastic steps to prohibit the importation of such drugs; and if it were entirely prohibited I do not think that would be very injurious to capital or to the people of this community. There is another direction in which the energy and zeal of the Health Department might well be exercised. I refer to the confectionery sold in this State. There is no doubt that positively injurious substances are used, not only in the body of the article but in the colouring matter which gives the tints so familiar in shop windows. We are permitting such manufacturers to injure the population at the very age when it is essential that only the most wholesome substances should be eaten; and this is a matter to which the Health Department should devote their attention. In the provisions regarding the sale of food and drugs I can find no clause which permits of anything being done to punish the outside manufacturers who send injurious substances to this State. It is true that their local representatives, the importers, may be dealt with under the Bill; but there is no means whatever of reaching the manufacturers. And though we cannot bring them before our courts and fine them, we can penalise them to an even greater extent by absolutely prohibiting the importation of their goods until these are brought up to a standard recognised by our Health Department. That would bring manufacturers to their bearings; and I hope the Minister will accept a clause moved with that object.

The Minister for Mines: We can absolutely prohibit the sale of certain drugs by name; but the manufacturers can then change the names.

Mr. BATH: But after all, the store-keeper, chemist, or other retailer is the person penalised. He has to bear all the expense, including the fine imposed; but he has no redress whatever against the manufacturer, who is not put to any expense.

The Minister: The retailer may claim damages from the manufacturer's agent.

Mr. BATH: But then the agent suffers, and the outside manufacturer goes free all the time. We should prohibit the im-

portation, instead of directing our attention to the sale. If there be any class of drugs or patent medicines found by the Health Department to be injurious, I would absolutely stop those goods right at the port of entry, before penalising anyone in this State; and I would make the manufacturer in Great Britain, the United States, or the Continent, pay the penalty, by stopping any farther importation of his products. One point I missed in regard to the central authority constituted under this Bill. While as the Minister says there may be grounds for objection against the local authorities exercising certain powers because of their neglect in the past, we also have many instances of neglect on the part of the Central Board of Health. I know of an instance. I was not a member of the deputation in question; but I know that when there was an outbreak of enteritis on the goldfields, and a very large number of infants was dying there at an abnormal rate during the early part of this year, the members for Boulder (Mr. Collier) and Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan) waited as a deputation on the head of the Central Board of Health, with a view to laying before him the serious position of affairs. He had had in front of him the *West Australian* with a highly sensational paragraph referring to the number of deaths that had occurred. When those members brought the matter before him he stated that though he had seen the paragraph he had not read it. They gave him particulars, told him all about the outbreak; and even then he did not seem to realise its seriousness until it filtered into his intellect that the deputationists were members of the Legislative Assembly; and then he said it must be serious.

Mr. Collier: That was at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. BATH: After loading the two members with pamphlets about flies and fleas, he was at last induced to send an officer to Kalgoorlie to report on the outbreak.

Mr. Collier: He told us to instruct the women to boil the milk. He said he had never drunk a drop of unboiled milk.

Mr. Scaddan: And that he had been forty years in the country, and had never experienced a day's sickness.

Mr. BATH: Had it not been for the fact that these two gentlemen brought the matter before him, it is probable that a serious outbreak would have been permitted to arise without attention from the Central Board. When accusations of neglect are lodged against the local authorities the Central Board as constituted in the past have not been free from blame.

The Minister for Mines: In the case you mention, did the local authorities neglect to advise?

Mr. BATH: There are provisions in the Bill as to the protection of life, which I think should better have been included under the measure dealing with infant life protection, for they practically refer to the same question. I would bring before the Minister the desirability of making an innovation similar to that introduced in New Zealand not long ago and which had excellent results; that is that the State should pay for duly qualified midwives to assist in cases where perhaps the poverty of the people prevents them from employing nurses. The Bill was introduced to New Zealand by the late Mr. Seddon some years ago and it has had very beneficial results, and in no direction more so than by reducing infant mortality. The rate of infant mortality is less now in New Zealand than in any part of Australasia. I hope the suggestion will commend itself to the Government and I am sure it will receive the support of members of this House. I have no intention of referring to any other provisions on the second reading, but in Committee I will draw attention to a number of matters which I think require dealing with. I shall assist the Government in passing this measure, which is very much needed, if they will be amenable to the views of members who have had a great deal of experience in local administration and can therefore give good advice in this respect.

On motion by *Mr. Angwin*, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN.

Second Reading moved.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) in moving the second reading said: In introducing this measure I feel satisfied that the Bill will receive sympathetic consideration from members sitting on both sides of the House. However strenuous the opposition may be in contentious matters, and however vigorous the criticism of members on measures which we cannot see eye to eye upon, there are occasions on which we might join forces and unite in framing legislation which will, as I am satisfied it will in connection with this measure, reflect credit on the House as a deliberative Assembly. While we recognise that Parliament has many duties to perform in developing this great State of ours, we have another side to our duty, that is to deal with the social side of our national life, which possibly is almost as important as that in regard to the development of the State. This measure is a very important one and is both a consolidating and amending Bill. It has received considerable attention in another Chamber and was referred to a select committee which, after taking a considerable amount of evidence as to the scope of work of the various institutions brought under this Bill and other measures, presented a report which was adopted. In considering the Bill in Committee very few alterations were made to the measure. There was some difference of opinion as to whether the control of this department should be by a department or a council. Some persons were of opinion that the procedure adopted in South Australia of placing the administration of this Act under a council would be in the best interests of the State rather than that it should be controlled by a department. My colleague the Colonial Secretary however, who has given this question every consideration and has taken a very great interest in the matter, considered that it would be much better that the Government should control these various institutions, administer the Act and the considerable sum of money—some £16,000 or £18,000—which the State has to find each year, rather than that they

should be controlled by a council. In South Australia the system of control by a council has worked fairly successfully, having the advantage of working under Government administration for many years previously to the establishment of the council, and consequently they gained during that time a great deal of experience. In South Australia there were one or two ladies who took a very keen interest in this matter for many years prior to the advent of the council, and consequently had gained experience which we do not possess here. It was intended to introduce this measure last session, but owing to the short time at the disposal of Parliament it was not found possible to do so. There was a certain advantage in this, however, for in the interval Mr. Longmore, the Superintendent of Public Charities, had an opportunity, as had the members of the Government, to study existing legislation in the various States, and Mr. Longmore went to the Eastern States and made full inquiries there. He made himself conversant with the methods adopted in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, with the result that all the good features of the legislation of those States have been, as far as possible, adopted in this measure. The Bill is framed particularly on the Victorian Act, although many of the clauses which are considered good in the New South Wales and South Australian Acts are included. The select committee of another Chamber, in reporting on the Bill, recommended the adoption of the system as embodied in the measure. They were practically unanimous as to most provisions; but two members were apparently in favour of direct State control, while two others were of opinion that the Act could be better administered by a council as in South Australia. The council in the sister State consists of, I think, 12 members, there being representatives of various religious organisations on the board. As I have said, they had the advantage of considerable experience previously under departmental control, and therefore were far more qualified to enter upon their work than would be any persons appointed here at the present time. The

same necessity does not exist here, more especially in view of the fact that we have a good many institutions now which are being managed very satisfactorily. We think it would be far better if the administration of this measure were kept under the control of Mr. Longmore. The Bill repeals four Industrial and Reformatory Schools Acts from 1874 to 1893 and also repeals that portion of the Health Act of 1898 which relates to infant life protection. From past experience it was thought much better to have the provisions for dealing with infant life in the State Children Act rather than that certain clauses dealing with the question should appear in the Health Act as formerly. The Bill introduces some new features so far as Western Australia is concerned, and more especially in connection with the establishment of children's courts, the boarding-out system, the licensing of children for street trading, and the subsidising of maternity homes. There are also other matters to which I will refer later. A good deal has been said lately in favour of the boarding-out system of Victoria and South Australia, and ample provision is included in the Bill for the adoption of this system should it be desired, and also for the provision of boarding-out committees, not only in Perth but also outside the metropolitan area. Although the boarding-out system is provided for, it is not to be inferred that any fault is to be found with the existing institutions. We are fully alive to the good work which is being done by them, and I would ask members to refer to Mr. Longmore's report in connection with the various institutions. If they do so they will find that, after giving close inspection to them, he is of opinion that they will compare more than favourably with institutions of a similar nature in the Eastern States. Indeed, had it not been for these institutions, it would have been difficult to know what would have become of the many neglected children in the State. There are altogether 10 institutions in the State under Government control, namely, the Catholic Girls' Orphanage, controlled by the Sisters of Mercy at Subiaco, which was established in 1863; the Protestant Girls'

Orphanage, in St. George's Terrace, established in the same year; the Swan Orphanage for Boys, established in 1871; the Clontarf Orphanage for Catholic Boys, first established in 1871 at Subiaco and in 1901 moved to the Canning; St. Kevin's Reformatory for Catholic Boys at Glendalough, near Leederville; the Government Industrial and Reformatory School for Boys and Girls, established at Subiaco in 1894; the Salvation Army Boys' Reformatory School at Collie, established in 1901; the Salvation Army Girls' Reformatory School at Collie; the Redhill Industrial School for Boys at Midland Junction, established in 1903; and the Salvation Army Industrial School for Protestant Boys at Collie, established in 1904. There are in all something like 600 children in these various institutions, 530 of whom are paid for by the State. Children up to the age of 14 years are paid for by the State at the rate of 1s. 1½d. per day, which includes maintenance, clothing, and education, while the older children sent to industrial schools are paid for at the rate of 1s. 6d. a day. It must be remembered that the whole of the buildings, etcetera, in connection with these institutions have been paid for by the institutions, and the only subsidy they get is in the shape of the payment which I have mentioned. Besides these institutions, there is the Waifs' Home at Parkerville, at which there are 60 boys and girls. This institution receives a subsidy of pound for pound from the Government up to £300. In addition there are similar institutions in various parts of the State. There are the Salvation Army homes at Fremantle and Highgate Hill; and also there is the home of the Good Shepherd at Leederville, which contains 90 female inmates at present ranging in age from 14 to 15 years to old women. These institutions, however, are more for grown up girls than for children. The principal deficiency of the present Act is the fact that very little provision is made for the maintenance and care of infants under the age of two years. Generally speaking, the institutions to which I have referred do not cater especially for them, the bulk of the inmates being much over that age. These

remarks apply to all the institutions with the exception of the Waifs' Home at Parkerville. Ample provision is made in the Bill for children from the time they are born until they attain the age of 18 years. But it must not be inferred that at the present time infants are neglected. There is a Government Maternity Home at Pier Street, entirely separated from the Old Women's Home. During 1906 there were 46 admissions there and 40 births took place in the Home. Also at Subiaco, attached to the Industrial School is a nursery for children under the age of two or three years. At present this institution contains three children under the age of two years and 10 children under the age of eight years. Later on these children are drafted to the various institutions.

At 6.15, the Speaker left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

The PREMIER (continuing) : I was referring to what is being done at the present time by the Charities Department in the way of providing for neglected children. It is also provided at present that the Charities Department should assist widows in some cases in the support of their children by monetary grants, allowances, rations, and in some cases clothing. All such cases, I may say, are dealt with on their merits. That is practically the method adopted at the present time ; and it must be admitted by those who have studied it that this Bill is a distinct advance upon the present procedure. It may not be out of place here to briefly mention the systems in force in the Eastern States in regard to the treatment of neglected and destitute children throughout Australia. Victoria has a number of subsidised institutions which are used principally for delinquent children, and there are also a number of private institutions which receive no State aid whatever, receiving boys and maintaining them without State assistance. Some 2,400 children are being dealt with in Victoria in this way. Provision is made in Part VI. of the Bill for the establishment here of similar philanthropic institutions. In Victoria the boarding-out system is adopted to a great extent.

There are some 2,000 children boarded out at the present time in that State in foster homes, and some 1,000 boarded out with their mothers where the latter are in poor circumstances. There is a large number of boarding-out committees in Victoria, and these are I understand of great assistance. Provision is made in the Bill for four boarding-out committees, and these are not to be restricted to the metropolitan area, but in different parts of the State there will be constituted boarding-out committees consisting of ladies charitably disposed, who may in some degree, take the place of parents to those children boarded out with foster mothers. Due precaution will be taken to see that foster homes are licensed and that those in charge are of good repute ; and in any case where a child has been boarded out by the committee to a foster mother and it is found the surroundings are not desirable, the child may be sent to one of the institutions at present in receipt of assistance from the Government. I have not had an opportunity of going over many of these local institutions ; but quite recently I had the pleasure of inspecting the home at the Collie, and the work being done under the superintendence of the Salvation Army officers at that settlement is all that can be desired. The children seemed happy, have a comfortable home, and are kept well. The boys looked healthy, and are being taught work which will be of value to them in after-life ; while the girls under the care of the matron, also an officer of the institution, are taught sewing and other household duties which must be of benefit later in life. Children's courts have been established in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia on lines similar to those in the Bill. In South Australia, as previously mentioned, State children are principally boarded out, some 600 at present dealt with in this way ; and there are several other institutions which deal with smaller children on the New South Wales system. In Victoria they have adopted the children's court. Another feature adopted from New South Wales is that regulating street trading by children. Coming to the Bill itself, it will be found that the

first part deals with definitions, which are somewhat numerous. Part II. provides for the constitution of a State Children Department, which will be under the control of the Superintendent of Charities. The duties of these boarding-out committees are that they shall assist the department as far as possible in providing suitable homes, and also inspect those homes to see that in them the children receive proper treatment, reporting constantly to either the Minister or the department. Provision is also made for the appointment of lady inspectors, this being a decided advance on the present practice; that is to say, a girl who is in trouble of any sort will be able to interview the lady inspector instead of, as has been the custom hitherto, being obliged to tell her trouble to a man. Applications are now being called for a nurse who will be qualified to act as inspector; and it is anticipated that when the Bill becomes law it will be necessary to appoint additional lady inspectors. Clause 10 of Part II. provides how children are to be dealt with. They will, first of all, be placed in the receiving dépôt at Subiaeo and either transferred thence, if it is decided they are to be permanent cases, into one of the existing institutions or be apprenticed out. Part IV. provides for the establishment of a children's court. This is a distinct advance, and an innovation which I am satisfied will commend itself to members. It is provided that a special magistrate shall be appointed to preside over this court, the proceedings of which are to be held *in camera* in a room apart from the ordinary police court. In places where no such room is available, the case will be heard in the magistrate's room; and I have provided by an amendment placed on the Notice Paper to-day that the proceedings in a children's court shall not be published in the newspapers. I do not know that I need say much more in connection with this matter. It is provided that no person shall take a child for fee or reward, unless registered by the department so to do as a foster mother, except in the case of a near relative. It is also provided that no foster mother shall receive a lump sum for the care of any infant; but in all cases in which a

lump is to be paid it will be paid out by the department. When the State hands over a child to a foster mother, naturally she will give greater attention to that child, knowing the State is responsible for the payment and for the oversight and custody of the child entrusted to her care. It is farther provided that no foster mother shall take charge of more than a limited number of children. The inspectors will report as to the number of children they consider it advisable to entrust to the care of any one foster mother. Unless good homes can be found for children under the boarding-out system, it will be preferable they should be sent to one or other of the institutions at present subsidised by the Government. The homes of these foster mothers are to be open to inspection by the inspectors of the department at any time, in the same way as the existing institutions are open to the fullest inspection. Part V. deals with the maintenance of children by relatives, this being an important and necessary part of the Bill; for it is as much the duty of the Government to see that parents do not escape the responsibility of paying for their children as it is to see that the children are provided with proper homes; and provision is made in the Bill to enforce payment by those parents who try to evade the duty of contributing to the support of their children. Part VI. deals with the committal of children to the care of private persons or societies. This part is quite new, and I commend it to the careful consideration of the House. I have here some information in regard to the Canadian system, with which I will not now weary the House, as I may refer to it when that portion of the Bill is under consideration in Committee. Part VII. provides for the licensing of children over the age of ten years for street trading. Part VIII. provides for lying-in homes and foster mothers. The State is empowered to contribute towards the support of lying-in homes and also to the support of any woman for a period not exceeding twelve months after the confinement. It is essential that the mother should be looked after as well as the child; and provision is made here that she shall be attended

to if necessary for twelve months after the child is born. [Mr. Stone: Is not twelve months too long a period ?] That will depend on the mother's state of health, and I think we may well err on the side of liberality. The Bill provides that it shall be an offence for keeping lying-in homes that are not licensed. These homes will always be open for inspection, and there is provision for penalties for foster mothers taking care of more children than allowed by the license. It stands to reason that except in very rare cases a woman cannot reasonably take care of more than one infant. These are the main provisions of the Bill which make ample provision for the neglected and delinquent children of our State. It is fully provided that no child need be without a home. Children can either be sent to foster mothers or to institutional homes. The main point to be kept in view is that ample provision has been made for every child, and I think the report of the select committee, which I commend for the consideration of hon. members, will show that the members of the committee, as regards the general principles laid down in this Bill, were unanimous that the measure represents a distinct advance on existing legislation, and that it is likely to prove of advantage to the neglected and destitute children, and to provide for their maintenance and reformation. I do not think I need add much more to commend this measure to the consideration of hon. members. I think members will recognise that we have endeavoured to bring in a measure which is a distinct advance on existing legislation, and is a genuine attempt to ameliorate the conditions of those of our children whose lives have not been cast in pleasant places, and who have been possibly denied that sympathy and affection which are the distinct characteristic of those brought up in happier circumstances. I feel the measure will receive the sympathetic consideration of the House. Any suggestions which hon. members may make to improve the Bill in any way will be welcomed by me.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): I congratulate the Government on having

brought this Bill forward, because the experience of the past few years in this State has brought home to everyone the necessity for some legislation in this direction, more especially events which have occurred within comparatively recent times. As the Premier has pointed out, the Bill follows on the lines adopted in Victoria, and I am in accord with the Premier and the Cabinet who are responsible for this measure, in that I believe it is preferable to have a department of this kind absolutely under the control of a Minister of the Crown responsible to Parliament, rather than to hand it over to what after all is really an irresponsible body of private individuals. No matter how laudable may be the intentions of some, there are evils which are likely to crop up through the private control of neglected and destitute children for which they will not be so amenable to criticism or correction as is a department of the State responsible to Parliament and through Parliament to the people. I go farther and say that in my opinion it is essentially the duty of the State, not only to look after those children so far as their material wants are concerned, but to step in and give them as far as possible equal opportunities with the children of more favoured citizens; because after all, those with the others will later on constitute the people of Western Australia, those upon whom the future of the State will be dependent; and it should be our desire and our effort to give to them a fair deal in every respect. Therefore, this Bill is a step in advance as a recognition of the obligation of the State towards these people, and as a promise perhaps of better things to come in future. Of course, when I speak of the State I speak of it as representative of the people as a whole. I recognise it will need some experience in the administration of a measure of this kind, perhaps the experience of many years, before we will really rise to a sense of our responsibilities and do all that should be expected of us in the care of these children. In Committee I shall have an opportunity of dealing with the individual clauses of the Bill, but I should like to refer to a matter which has not been

touched on by the Premier, and which has been a matter for contention in the newspapers for the last few weeks, that is, the failure of Clause 80 to give equal recognition to all those institutions, whether denominational or made up of citizens interested in this work, in the provisions of this Bill. While we make provision in the measure and have made provision on the Estimates of Expenditure from our consolidated revenue for the children in various denominational institutions, there is no reason why we should discriminate and give subsidies to some and fail to recognise the interest which others are displaying by giving them a subsidy in the same direction. I am satisfied that the clause will bear amendment, and I hope the Premier will be ready to receive an amendment which will make an alteration in that direction. In regard to the provision for lying-in homes, I think the time has arrived in Western Australia when the State, instead of subsidising private lying-in establishments, should step in and on behalf of the people establish maternity homes in the larger centres of population throughout the State. There is no doubt that a number of cases have cropped up which have shown the urgent necessity for such an institution, and on various occasions when the Colonial Secretary has been visiting the goldfields, this matter has been brought under his notice, but with no other result than his promise that, if cases that were certified to by various women's societies on the goldfields were brought under his notice, he would make provision for their being received at some local private hospital where such cases were received. I think it would be preferable and that it would be a step in advance if the State established maternity homes, and what is more, did what they do in New Zealand, to which I called attention when speaking on the Health Bill, provided certain qualified midwives to render assistance in deserving cases. The system has proved successful in New Zealand, and I believe it could be introduced with considerable benefit in Western Australia. When the Bill is in Committee it is my intention to move an amendment in the direction of providing power for the State itself to establish such maternity

homes, and I hope that this amendment will also receive the earnest consideration of the Premier. Otherwise I am in cordial sympathy with the Bill, and I hope that with effective and sympathetic administration it will do away with many of the evils that have cropped up, and which have made this Bill necessary in the interests of neglected and destitute children.

On motion by *Mr. Walker*, debate adjourned.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Resumed from the 23rd October.

Mr. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle): I recognise that most of the remarks on this Bill must necessarily be of the same nature as those made on the Railway Estimates; but as far as in my power lies, I shall not trespass to that degree, and I shall endeavour to confine myself more to the suggested amendments of the parent Act. It is as well at the outset to remember why the Bill is introduced. Last year a motion was moved by the member for Collie practically dealing with the system of Ministerial or Commissioner control. In fact, the motion was direct in its nature "that in the opinion of this House Ministerial control should be reverted to." Some interesting discussion took place, and I verily believe the motion would have been adopted by this House had it not been for a special appeal the Minister made just before the vote was taken. Of course, an explanation may have been necessary under the conditions, because a promise had been given that the parent Act would be brought down for amendment, and the Minister explained that if the motion were defeated nothing would be done by the Government until this House had something to say on the matter. So far we are bound to compliment the Government on having kept their word. Nothing has been done; and I take it the sense of the House is now required to arrive at some decision; and whatever it may be, if the decision is somewhat against what the Government propose, I take it also the Government will adopt

what this House decides. Let me first of all say that I am entirely favourable to Ministerial control. Of course, the Minister when speaking on that motion last session gave us some fairly logical arguments against the proposal. He quoted several States that had altered from Ministerial to Commissioner control, in some cases to three Commissioners and in others to one Commissioner; and he quoted two places that at present have Ministerial control, Tasmania and New Zealand. Of course, Tasmania has always had Ministerial control, and New Zealand has had it for some twelve years. I think we can look to those countries for a lesson, and I am perfectly satisfied that the term of Commissioner control that this State has had, has not been to the best interests of the railways nor to the best interests of the State.

[*Mr. Daghish took the Chair.*]

Mr. BOLTON (continuing) : I do not purpose going into a lot of figures, as I think most of the figures were exhausted last year. The member for Collie gave us the percentage of expenditure to revenue received and the percentage of revenue to the capital invested, and so on. I am satisfied to let those figures remain. I am satisfied that under the present Bill, which seeks to amend certain clauses in the parent Act, the desired effect will hardly be arrived at, unless that effect is to relieve the Minister controlling the department of all responsibilities, and to allow him to shelter himself behind the Commissioner when necessary, and to allow the Commissioner to shelter himself behind the Minister when it is necessary for him to do so. I may be permitted to refer to the clauses, not exactly as numbering them, but to show how they read in accordance with the Act. It is sought to amend Section 22. Now, this is the section that gives the Commissioner most of his powers, although it is headed with these words :—"The Commissioner may with the approval of the Minister from time to time by notice in the *Government Gazette*" do certain things. It is sought to amend that clause by providing that the powers conferred on the Commissioner may from time to time be exer-

cised by the Governor, and at the same time the position will be a most unfortunate one both for the Minister and the Commissioner; because it naturally follows that whatever policy the Government may intend to carry out, if this system is continued—that of Commissioner control—and the Government place a Commissioner at the head of the service there must be friction. Without referring especially to the time of elections, I admit right here that it is right for the head of the Government to make certain statements as to the policy of the Government. The Government may outline their policy for the reduction of freights or the adoption of the zone system to benefit the producers in opposition to the policy of the Commissioner, and then there must be friction between the Minister and the Commissioner. It generally follows the Commissioner has his way. It has been said by members that this is because the Minister is not a strong man. I do not quite agree with that, because I think however strong a Minister may be, he can hardly be expected to understand the working of the railways and he must look to the Commissioner for his information. It again follows that the Commissioner is able to put arguments before the Minister that the Minister has to use to argue against those who perhaps are opposing the Government. It comes to this: the Commissioner is given power under Section 22 of the parent Act to do almost anything he likes, and the Minister will have power to veto anything the Commissioner does if he thinks fit. The proposal is :—

"Provided also that the powers conferred upon the Commissioner by this section may, from time to time, be exercised by the Governor, and any charges, conditions, and regulations fixed or imposed by the Governor shall supersede the charges, conditions, or regulations fixed or imposed by the Commissioner."

To that I am bound to take exception. It is all right to have power to review the charges, the Minister should have power to control the rate book, but when it is provided that the Minister shall have

power to veto regulations issued by the Commissioner it amounts to this, that the travelling public and the producers who use the railways and all others except the Minister and the Commissioner will not know where they stand. No matter what regulations or rules the Commissioner may be working under, with the sole object perhaps of making the railways pay, and perhaps with the object of carrying out the policy of the Government, the object of the Government may not be to make the railways pay but to leave the railways for the use of the public, and the regulations made by the Commissioner can be vetoed by the Minister. It follows that whatever the Commissioner may do under instructions perhaps from the Minister or the Government—the Ministry have power to instruct the Commissioner to remove regulations that will press hardly on producers—the Government thus get credit for something which they have no right to obtain credit for. I do not say that will be done, but it could be done. When the clause is understood it will be found that is the way it will work. The clause previous to that—and I suppose that is the sole reason for the Bill being introduced—states that the salary of the Commissioner shall be a certain amount. The Government propose to strike out the amount of the salary, and for the present I am in agreement with the Government. I think it is better to strike out the amount of the salary, and in addition to that I would like to strike out a lot of the words in the clause and in the parent Act in addition to striking out the amount of the salary. I do not think we shall want the salary of a Commissioner at all. I should like to see a general manager appointed under Ministerial control. The railway system would be run with more advantage to the State and to the railways themselves if we had a general manager. The railways were run with greater advantage to the State when we had a general manager, but he was not allowed to expend on works what he wished to do so as to bring the railways up to the state of efficiency they are in to-day; he was always held back. The late Commissioner

although perhaps he had not a free hand had considerably more latitude than the only general manager that we have had. If we had another such man as the general manager referred to there would be a vast improvement in our railway system and the railways would not only pay, but pay handsomely, leaving the Minister to use the surplus in the interests of the producer and consumer. It is all very well to say the railways, year after year, have paid the interest and a little portion of the sinking fund, and in the same breath to propose a reduction of freights to the extent of £50,000. I am of opinion that if under Ministerial control we had a capable manager, if we could save over and above the sinking fund £50,000, it would be the duty of the Government to spend that money in the interests of the producer and the consumer. But the railways are run at a loss, they do not pay interest and sinking fund, and it is a question whether there should be a reduction of freights if less revenue is received, and consequently less of the sinking fund applied. We should call a halt, and we should again have Ministerial control. Under the section I have just read there will be dual control. I cannot for the life of me see why under the parent Act we give the Commissioner power to do almost anything, and then under the amendment, power is given to the Minister to veto anything that the Commissioner does. If that is not dual control I do not know what is. The amendment to the next section deals with the regulations.

The Minister for Railways: Only in regard to charges.

Mr. BOLTON: The alteration is not clear. The clause says, "Fixed scale of charges to be paid," and then it enumerates what charges are to be made. If the proposed amendment to Section 22 is simply to affect the freights, the charge for the hire of cranes, the carriage of mails, the parcels post, the passing of locomotives and so on, there is not quite so much objection to it. Still there will be some trouble in the future if Commissioner control is persisted in. The Minister proposes and the Minister disposes, as he thinks fit. It does not matter. The

great argument has been advanced in this House and in other places that there is no continuity under Ministerial control, but I am of opinion that there is far more continuity under Ministerial control with a capable general manager than under the present system. A capable general manager is responsible to the Minister who is responsible to the House, and no matter what Government is in power or has been in power, or how long it has been in power, there will still be continuity of policy. No matter what Minister has control of the railways he will not alter a policy which has been beneficial to the State. It will not break the continuity of the policy under Ministerial control as it will under Commissioner control, because a Commissioner is appointed for a set time while a Minister is not appointed for a set term; it seems to me it is for just as long as he behaves himself. There is more likely to be a break of policy under the Commissioner system than under Ministerial control. It has always been the same. It will be within the minds of members that Ministers of Railways have objected to certain actions of the Commissioner, and there has not been much notice taken of the objections or the matter has been dealt with in such a way as to lead to no objection. Moreover the Commissioner has been required to take certain action and the Minister has disagreed with his taking it. I do not want to refer to any specific case, for I am not attacking the late Commissioner, the present Acting Commissioner, or the Minister, but I am attacking the system. I remember the Minister attempted to get a solution of a difficulty in connection with the Fremantle railway station, and the Commissioner was told by the Minister to consult with certain heads so that things should not overlap, for there was a good deal of duplicate work. The Commissioner took very little notice of what he was told to do, because he claimed—he did not go to the house-tops to proclaim it—that he was given supreme powers under the Act, and he did not do what he was told. The question comes up, who does control the railways and what power has the Minister at all, if we

accept his statement, except on charges to be fixed, and in no other particular? Whilst we are treated with courtesy when information is sought from the Railway Department it is obtained by the Commissioner and given by him to the Minister. Everything the Minister obtains is from the Commissioner and must be accepted as fact because the Minister who controls the railways has, as a rule, another important office to fill as well as that of Minister for Railways. And without disrespect to the Minister, he does not know anything about the railways, and if we go back a long way we shall find that the Ministers for Railways have never known much about the railways. It is simply a side issue to another portfolio. It would be far better if the Minister would take more interest in the railway system. This is rather a large order, but if it meant the creation of another portfolio or another Minister to fill that portfolio it would be better for the country to have a Minister to look after the railway system. Then we should have greater satisfaction. The amendment to Section 29 is set out in Clause 4 of the Bill. In my opinion it goes a little too far. The Commissioner has certain powers under Section 23 of the parent Act to make by-laws on certain subjects, and there are about 27 subjects mentioned; so it is hardly necessary to read them, except to refer to one. It says:—

“The Commissioner shall have power to establish superannuation, sick, death, insurance, or guarantee funds, and for the deduction of prescribed contributions thereto from the pay of employees, and making the membership thereof a condition of the employment of employees.”

Mr. Scaddan: That is in contravention of the Truck Act.

Mr. BOLTON: I am inclined to think the same thing. But if the provision is placed in the Bill it will not be in contravention of the Truck Act. I am inclined to think it should not pass. It is not the right thing to make it a condition of employment for a man to be a member of the sick, death, benefit and accident fund. That appears to me to be a hard-

ship. I am quite satisfied the railway service has a very good death fund in operation to-day, and it is not compulsory, it is voluntary, and has made rapid strides. If a man desires to join the fund, nothing is done to stop him. But to make it a condition of employment that every man must join the fund is hard on the employees. There are a number of employees who have been in friendly societies for years; and they would not agree to leave those friendly societies. And to have to pay into two or three other funds as a condition of employment in the service would be hard on those employees, and would do a certain amount of harm to the friendly societies. In addition, it is provided that the Commissioner of Railways shall pay compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act. Now if this clause is passed as printed, my own opinion is that the employees and not the Commissioner will provide for that compensation. That is what it will mean. It is exactly the same as with the miners on the fields. They pay a shilling a week for medical attendance. If the employees of the railway service have of necessity to contribute to this fund, they will be providing medical fees and medical attendance, and providing against accident or death; and therefore it follows that the Commissioner will not have to pay that compensation for which he is now liable under the Workers' Compensation Act. It would be as well to leave that contribution voluntary, and not to make it a condition of employment. To do so will be decidedly hard on the employees, and I do not think the clause should pass in its present form. Again, Clause 11 seeks to alter the parent Act, which provides for the appeal board; and the clause provides that in case of the illness or absence of a member of the appeal board, the place of such member shall be filled by his deputy, appointed as aforesaid or elected at a triennial election as the case may be. The object seems to me to be to obtain a board apart from the unions. It is well known that the Commissioner has power under the parent Act to enter into industrial agreements which are entered into entirely between the Commis-

sioner and the unions, and which largely, if not altogether, govern all the employees. To give the nomination of a member of the appeal board to the unions, and in the event of his illness or non-attendance, to give power of appointing a deputy to the Governor, which expression means the Ministry, is in my opinion wrong. Because, if it be right that a member of the appeal board should be elected by the unions to represent them, it should follow that in his absence, or if he is disinclined or refuses to sit, the unions should have the right to nominate his deputy.

The Treasurer: They elect his deputy.

Mr. BOLTON: I understand that under the Bill they elect a deputy; but it is so easy for the deputy not to be there. Whoever is elected to sit as the original representative of the unions on that board is removed from any non-metropolitan centre where he is working, and is taken to the metropolitan area so that he may be available for board meetings. But not so with the deputy. It has happened that a member of the board has refused to sit, and the department have refused to put anybody in his place until three months before election time, within which period the Act provides that the department can temporarily appoint a man, or can wait till election time. They decided to wait until election time. Another case under these appeal clauses. An employee in the traffic branch appealed against a punishment. The Commissioner decided that the appellant could not go to the appeal board, and refused to hear the appeal. The appellant moved the Supreme Court, which held that he must be allowed to appeal and that the appeal court must sit to hear the case. After such a finding the board naturally met, and the case did not last five minutes. The appeal was dismissed. The board believed in the first place that he had no chance; but a great principle was decided as to whether the board had a right to refuse a man permission to appeal. The same principle will apply. If the deputy is not available, and very often he will not be—if the member of the board is absent and his deputy is not available—the union should have the right to nomi-

nate a deputy, either temporarily or permanently.

The Treasurer: So they have, under the second paragraph of Section 11.

Mr. BOLTON: That is what I am speaking of. Industrial agreements are entered into between the Commissioner and the unions, and the unions nominate and elect a member of the appeal board. The employees have the right to nominate a deputy to sit on the board in the absence of that member. I am inclined to think that should be left to the unions, as it is conclusively proved that upwards of sixty per cent. of the employees are unionists. That is an important point. Under the same heading it is proposed to amend Section 74, which also deals with appeal cases. It is unnecessary for me to remind the House that the two unions comprise about 3,000 members, a very large percentage of the staff, and mostly, if not all, wages men. And if we except perhaps the night officers, who are after all not very different from wages men included in the unions, 3,000 of the wages staff will show that perhaps more than sixty-five per cent. of the staff are in the unions. The members of the unions have taken great exception to the departmental evidence and files being used against them at appeal cases. It is not that the members object to having them used at all; but the system adopted is to hold a departmental inquiry first, and that is necessarily limited to the department and its employees. When a case goes to the appeal board the departmental evidence and file are at once put in, and that is why so few appeals are upheld. The employees consider that the departmental evidence should not be allowed before the appeal board, but that each case should stand on its merits, as in a re-trial in the Supreme Court, where, although the evidence taken in the lower court is before the Judges, the whole of the evidence is re-heard. From the returns it will be found that very few cases go before the appeal board, and the reform would involve very slight expense if the departmental evidence and files were kept out altogether, and the cases allowed to be heard on their merits. The men also desire that witnesses on either

side should be compelled to attend if notified. At the present time it is not necessary for them to attend. We can ask them to come, we can make application for them to be there, and there it ends. Section 37, corresponding with Clause 13 of the Bill, provides that no officer or servant of the department shall engage in any employment outside the duties of his office. The Bill proposes to insert, "except with the approval of the Commissioner." Why is this proposed?

The Minister for Railways: The exception refers only to the taking up of land; but I think the wording can be improved.

The Treasurer: Read the second paragraph.

Mr. BOLTON: The second paragraph is worse—"in any way participate or claim to be entitled to participate in the proceeds of or in any contract made by or on behalf of the Government." That would be all right; but when we give the Commissioner power to approve of some officers engaging in outside employment, I am inclined to think that the power can be stretched considerably, and to the disadvantage of some employees.

The Minister for Railways: I wish that to apply only to the taking up of land.

Mr. BOLTON: Then I do not see any objection to it. If it is only to allow certain men in certain positions, or all men in all positions, if found desirable, to take up land, there will be no objection.

The Minister: I think the provision needs amendment.

Mr. BOLTON: As it reads on the face of it, it does not appear to be altogether fair. Since 1902 the increase of the capital cost of the railways has been enormous, and of course I do not either blame Commissioner control or give credit to the Ministerial control which preceded it. Still, the main factor in deciding the question of Ministerial against Commissioner control is cost of operation; and when we consider that in 1902 the capital cost was £7,410,426, and that it had increased in 1907 to £10,300,938, we shall find that a good deal of this large increase represents money spent on bringing the railways up to their present state of efficiency; and that they are efficient no member will

gainsay, and their efficiency is a credit to the country, and also to those who in the past brought them to their present state. But after the expenditure in bringing them to their present state, it naturally follows that the cost of operation should be a good deal less. And when, at the very time we are amending the Act, the system is on a sort of see-saw—neither one thing nor the other decided on—it naturally follows that the arguments for Commissioner control will be considerably strengthened by cutting down the cost of operation for perhaps one or two years. That can very easily be done. In addition to having an increased capital cost, and bringing the railways into a state in which the cost of maintenance is not nearly so great as it used to be—for instance by the use of blue-metal ballast—in twelve months or perhaps in two years hence it will be argued that the cost of operation has been so reduced during the last twelve months or two years that Commissioner control is undoubtedly the best. I feel bound to say that under Ministerial control much less loan money would be spent on the existing lines to-day; and if so, the fact can be used as an argument for Ministerial control. The present state of the railways allows the Commissioner or the Minister to spend far less money on maintenance than had to be spent in the past; and when we find such a Government as the present, who ever since they took office have strongly advocated opening up the back country with lines here, there, and everywhere, and when we find at the same time the Commissioner (Mr. George) objected strongly to those lines, does it not follow that he would hardly put his shoulder to the wheel to make the lines too successful? And is it not natural for the Minister to object to those lines being made part of the existing system, thus making the cost much higher; when the Commissioner is not in favour of those lines? Perhaps the Minister had that in view when he decided to amend the parent Act to provide for district railways. This is quite a new departure; and I do not know whether I am correct in saying so, but according to an interview, the Minister intends not

to push at least one of the clauses of this Bill. I understand that not all the clauses are to be passed as they are printed. If they are, I am inclined to think that the Minister will meet with considerable opposition from members on his own side of the House. I am quite satisfied that Government supporters cannot agree to some of the clauses in this Bill; for some of them will be very hard indeed on the agricultural districts. To my mind the present clauses or suggested clauses dealing with district railways were originally drafted by the ex-Commissioner; and probably because they appeal to the Minister and perhaps to the present Acting Commissioner they have been embodied in this Bill. I advise the Minister to cut them out of the Bill; they are not needed. If the system of district railways is put in with any object it can only be with the object of lessening the responsibilities of the Commissioner, not only to the producers, those using the lines, but also to those working on the lines. It is going too far when it is provided that the Commissioner may make special regulations to deal with district employees, and I do not wonder at a good deal of opposition being offered to this clause. If the Minister sees no necessity to press for some of these clauses, as he claimed in the Press if I remember aright, because he was already safeguarded in the parent Act, it will not read so badly; but I cannot understand why Subclause 2 of Clause 17 is in the Bill. This provides that the fact that a locomotive, whether attached to a train or not, is run tender first shall not be deemed evidence of negligence.

The Minister for Railways: It has been held that running tender first was proof of negligence.

Mr. BOLTON: I quite agree that there is danger that it may be used against the department.

The Minister: We have not the turntables.

Mr. BOLTON: The cheapest system is the V. There is very little ballasting needed for a V. I know that for many years we had no turntable at Chidlow's Well, which was the terminus of one of the most important sections for the gold-

fields traffic, and I believe the V is there now though a turntable has since been put in. The V does not cost much; and while it is all very well to protect the department against damages or any action that might lie for the tender running first, I cannot help saying that the Poison Gully accident would not have occurred had the locomotive been running engine first. It is not safe at any time to run a train tender first, but I would advise the Government to take out this subclause and spend a few pounds in putting V's at the end of these spur lines. If the Government cannot afford turntables the V's can be put down at very little expense. They would do away with the need for the subclause and would certainly relieve the Commissioner of any responsibility of an action at law. The railways would be ever so much safer and more comfortable. The Government should not ask to be relieved of all responsibility towards those using the line and those who work on the lines, because that is what this subclause amounts to. One of the best arguments for Ministerial control is the fact that under a Minister who would be directly responsible to this House, and who would not be able to say, "The Commissioner has the sole management of the railways, and all I do is to give the Government policy to him to work," it would be absolutely necessary for the heads of departments to confer before any big work was undertaken. That has been one of the faults of this railway system for many years. At any rate since Commissioner control it has been a standing disgrace to see one department take a work in hand for twelve months or perhaps two years, and afterwards for another department to come along and alter all that work, and perhaps before they have completed it for a third department to step in and say, "It is all wrong; it has to be done all over again." Not only on the Fremantle station but in the railway yards at Fremantle some great blunders were made because the heads of departments did not confer, and it did not seem possible for the Minister to make them confer. I do not maintain it was weakness on the part of the Minister, because the

Minister could not do it; I maintain the Commissioner had far too great powers in this regard.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner had not power to spend 6d. until he got authority. We could have stopped him if the money had not been spent.

Mr. BOLTON: I know that when Mr. George took the work in hand signal boxes that were erected had again to be removed. When we have different departments and subdepartments, there should be a system under which they can all work together, and the heads can confer and come to a common understanding, and the Minister can say, "That is the scheme to be followed." If we cannot have that it is absurd to say we have a Minister for Railways. Unless the Minister has power to demand that the Commissioner shall take a certain action in a certain direction it is no use having a Minister; because if we give to the Commissioner all the power except the power to spend money, it is only necessary for the Commissioner to go to the Minister with his estimates. For instance on the Estimates this session we have two items covering over £800,000, and we have items like "Additions to rolling stock" that are not sufficiently explanatory to the House or even to the Minister. The Minister must depend upon the explanation of the Commissioner who has asked him for the money.

The Minister: When did this expenditure you speak of in connection with the Fremantle yard occur?

Mr. BOLTON: I think it was in Mr. Rason's time, or it was in Mr. Johnson's time. There was a conference, but it took place some months after it should have been held. If it had taken place some months earlier thousands would have been saved. There are some amendments I am desirous of moving. I propose to them on the Notice Paper, but with the permission of the House I desire to show what they are without going too closely into them. Perhaps the Minister may see his way to agree to them. Probably there will be a fight on the first amendment. This Bill is really to amend the existing Act, and mainly

to allow for an increased salary for the Commissioner. I propose to strike out the word "Commissioner" wherever it occurs in the parent Act, and to substitute "General Manager." That will allow the House to decide as to Ministerial or Commissioner control.

The Minister: That debate can take place on the second clause of this Bill.

Mr. BOLTON: That is perhaps where we can decide whether there should be Ministerial control or not; but still my amendments are worthy of discussion. They are not put forward for the purpose of prolonging discussion or for blocking the Bill; they are put forward by bodies who know something of the working of railways, and I am sure they are worthy of consideration. The Minister will do no harm in going into them.

The Minister: I shall be only too glad to do so.

Mr. BOLTON: I shall put them on the Notice Paper and members can see them. I am satisfied some of them will get a good deal of consideration, and the Minister may consent to them; some may be acceptable to him. At any rate members will be able to exercise their right to say whether there should be farther amendments to the parent Act or not. At one time I felt almost certain the House would decide on Ministerial control. As to what it shall be now I have no inkling, but had the motion of the member for Collie last year been put to a vote after that little tearful appeal of the Minister, it would have been carried, and perhaps the Government would have been committed to Ministerial control. According to the Minister, the Ministry are not favourable to Ministerial control, and prefer the present system. I suppose they will say that few arguments have been put up for Ministerial control. Certainly that can be answered by exactly the same contention. There is nothing this House has yet heard that is favourable to a continuation of a policy that has given rise to a good deal of dissatisfaction throughout the whole of the State. I do not contend as some have contended that it has always been the individual. It has not been the individual who was placed there. Necessarily with the con-

flicting policies of a Commissioner who was asked, instructed or ordered to make the railways pay, and of a Ministry who were continually bound to give certain concessions in different districts, which entirely altered the policy of the Commissioner, I ask how was it possible for a Commissioner with any satisfaction to himself or to the Government to continue in a policy which he had been ordered to take in hand and carry out through the whole of his term? Interference took place, and yet when the Minister is taken to task for anything in connection with railway matters it is very easy for him to say, "The Commissioner has this and that power, and consequently the Minister does not interfere with minor details." It would be better for this State and for the railways—I do not want to throw out a suggestion for a rearrangement of portfolios—if the Premier would seriously consider the advisability of another Minister taking charge of the railways, certainly the most gigantic concern in this State. The benefit of doing so would be seen in a very short time.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): It is to be regretted that a Bill of such great importance as the present proposal is being discussed in a sparsely attended House. I look upon this as one of the most important measures that could be discussed. It is essentially one that should be considerably discussed on the second reading, but I find that on the Government side of the House the attendance is very small, and that those who should be taking an interest in this measure are absent. [*Mr. Gordon:* The attendance is also small on your side.] It is to be regretted. I did think that on this Bill at least we would have got some intelligent discussion on the merits or demerits of the various systems of control; because after all, that is the main question, as was demonstrated by the speech of the Minister. He started off by stating that he only intended to deal with one provision at length, namely the provision where it was proposed to give the Governor-in-Council power to fix the salary of the Commissioner; but after making that statement, the Minister evi-

dently forgot all about it; because he never mentioned it again. Possibly the Minister reconsidered his decision, and decided to deal with the question on the Committee stage. However, this is one point of the Bill on which I want explanation. I failed to get it from the Minister. Possibly he will give some explanation when we reach the Committee stage. While the Minister pointed out that he only intended to deal with this provision, he evidently realised that after all the main features of the Bill, the portion which would receive the greatest amount of consideration by the House, was the question whether we should continue the present system of control or whether we should revert to Ministerial control. I agree with the Minister there, for I believe that is the main object of this measure, and the main consideration that should receive the attention of the House. After all we must settle that consideration before we come to the question of the management and the details so ably spoken to by the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton). In connection therewith, that member has my hearty support. When we reach the Committee stage, if we do not alter the question of control, he will have my support in those amendments. The Minister dealt with the merits of the two systems of control. I thought, when he was speaking, that he contradicted himself in various ways and made a "yes-no" speech on this question, but when one sits down and reads *Hansard* one cannot but be struck by the contradictions that appear in the arguments advanced. Undoubtedly the Minister made a "yes-no" speech on the question. In order to point this out I want to quote from the Minister's speech. He starts off by saying:—

"By adopting Ministerial control we are compelled to throw the whole of the responsibility for the administration of the department on the Minister; and I ask, is the Minister for the time being ever selected because of special knowledge in regard to railway administration?"

In another portion of his speech he says:

"The railways should be used in future more for the purpose of de-

veloping the primary industries of the State than they have been previously. What I desire to convey by that is that the Government should control the policy of the railways and that is where the Minister is necessary. To my mind the whole of the working of the railway system should be left entirely in the hands of the Commissioner."

If you are going to do that why let the Minister interfere at all?

The Minister for Railways: Let him control the policy.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister now says he should control the policy, and yet in his speech he said the Commissioner should control, for he goes on to say:—"But the full responsibility should lie on the Government." He states in one place that the Minister should not take the responsibility because he is not elected owing to special knowledge and then proceeds to say "full responsibility—[*The Minister for Railways:* "Of the policy"]—of the policy—that is not in the speech but I accept it—"should rest with the Government." Continuing his speech the Minister said:—

"When the Government desire that freights should be altered or that any alteration should be made in connection with what we may term the policy of the railways the Government should on all occasions be compelled to take the full responsibility. When we altered the timber freights I saw some of the newspaper strictures upon the Commissioner; and when we altered the grain freights the Commissioner was again criticised; but in both those instances the Commissioner was antagonistic to the reductions; and it was simply because the Government insisted upon their being effected that they were made. Under the present Act the Commissioner recommends charges, and once they are approved there is no power to alter them unless the Commissioner agrees to the alteration; but in this Bill we give the Governor-in-Council power to supersede the charges made by the Commissioner. Instead of the Commissioner having to do something he does not approve

of, the Governor-in-Council will have power to make an alteration in the rates and the Government must accept the responsibility for the action taken." That illustration absolutely agrees with my contention that the policy of the railways should be under Ministerial control. The policy should be governed by the Minister and in order to do that the railways should be run so as to develop this State. As far as that goes, we are at one, I contend, in the idea that the railway system is the main factor in developing this vast State of ours, and unless the Government have control of the railways to work in with our general policy, they cannot make a success of the general development of the State. We must work the railways, not as a commercial concern to make them pay working expenses, interest and sinking fund, but to make working expenses and interest and afterwards to use them to develop the State. It is open to argument as to whether it is wise to insist on interest being paid. The present Ministry have departed from that themselves, for they must know that the new agricultural railways will not pay interest. They may pay working expenses, but the indirect benefit of those lines will pay to the consolidated revenue sufficient to meet working expenses, interest and, I venture to say, sinking fund. We get an indirect benefit, but to calculate it the general policy of the railways must be worked in harmonious connection with the general policy of the Government and this can only be done by giving the Minister absolute control of the railway system. The Minister contradicts himself, for in another portion of his speech he says:—

"I am one of those who believe the railway system should not be looked on as a mere earning department but that, after paying working expenses and interest on capital, they should be used as far as they possibly can for the purpose of developing the primary industries of the State."

How can we expect the Minister and the Commissioner to work harmoniously together when you say to one "You want to work the railways to pay working expenses and interest?" and to another:—"I

am satisfied this line should be operated in a certain manner, as we do not want to pay interest but to reap the indirect benefit from the operations of the line." Immediately the two come into conflict. There will always be conflict between the Commissioner and the Minister, for the former is judged by the amount of money he earns per train mile. His qualifications and ability are not limited to Western Australia, for reports of the results of his labour are criticised from one end of Australasia to another, and comparisons are drawn from the revenue per train mileage. In other words his work is judged by the amount of revenue he derives from the railways.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. JOHNSON: That is the only way a Commissioner of Railways is judged. How can you expect a Commissioner to be judged as to how far he works in with the general policy of the Government, with the development of its resources, altogether outside the purview of working railways? How can you expect the Commissioner to become enthusiastic about land settlement, about the building of our agricultural railways? As a matter of fact we know the Commissioner opposed the construction of the agricultural railways, and why? because they were not paying propositions. He realised they would be a burden on him. The Minister said the railways would be of assistance to the State and realised that, so far as those railways were concerned, they would become a burden. The Commissioner, realising that he would be judged from the revenue derived from the operations of the working railways, opposed the agricultural railways for he knew well that their working would decrease his revenue. There were those conflicting opinions between the Commissioner and the Minister and, so long as they prevail, you will never have harmonious working between the two. You cannot say that the Minister, even under this Bill, will have the sole control of the policy of our working railways. There is only one way of getting control; that is by the Minister having absolute authority, working with a general manager

to look after the details. The Minister in such circumstances will always be able to dictate to the manager how the railways should be run. The Minister says that a Minister for Railways is not selected because of special knowledge of railways. I would ask which of the present Ministers were selected for their various positions because of special knowledge of the departments they were appointed to? Take the Minister for Mines for instance. When he was selected he could not be said to be an authority on the detailed working of mines. True, it may have been because he was a goldfields member and took a general interest in the mining industry, but as to the detailed working of mines he had no special knowledge at all, and that was not taken into consideration. Possibly he may say such a comparison should not be made with the position of Minister for Railways. Then we may take the case of the Minister for Works. He has to construct railways and spend huge sums in their construction, but he has no special knowledge of railway construction, for he simply runs the policy and the details are controlled by the Engineer-in-Chief. There is nothing in the argument that a Minister is selected because of his special knowledge of railways, public works, or anything else. The Minister for Works is in control of that huge concern, the Goldfields Water Supply, a trading scheme which has cost the country millions of money. We know that, so far as water supply and hydraulic engineering are concerned, the Minister for Works has no knowledge, but he controls the general policy, while the details in connection with the carrying out of that policy are left to the secretary and to the engineer. That is how we want the railways run. I do not want a Minister to interfere with the details of a department, for a Minister who does that will never be a success. He should lay down a definite policy and then expect his officers to carry out the details. If he has not officers to carry out that policy he should remove those he has and get others who can. The Minister who interferes with the details will always come to grief. I want a general policy controlled by a

Minister and the details of that policy carried out by a competent manager. This was the system we had some years ago. The Minister apparently has two arguments. I have already referred to the first and the other is that there would be political influence used. I want to take the strongest exception to the Minister's argument, so frequently advanced, that political influence starts and ends with employees. His arguments are exactly the same as we have often had, that if you have Ministerial control you will have members of Parliament going to the Minister and asking him to put on employees who are not competent and not required. The suggestion is that political control would be used in connection with the securing of employment for friends of members of Parliament. I resent that. As a matter of fact, at the conclusion of the Minister's speech, he admits that this system does not prevail here. He goes on to quote from a speech made by one of the Federal Ministers, who stated in referring to a Bill before the New South Wales Parliament, that they wanted to get away from Ministerial control because certain members of Parliament were using political influence to get men employment. The Minister for Railways had to go outside Western Australia and had to quote someone who after all may give an expression of opinion, but whose conclusions are not supposed to be taken as absolutely correct. The Minister goes to the extent of stating that the arguments advanced by the Federal Minister he quoted would not apply to Western Australia and he continues:—"I want to see our railways used to the greatest possible extent in the development of the country." It is remarkable how he continually harps on that. The only possible way he can achieve that result is by Ministerial control, and yet he says he is opposed to it. It is a contradiction to say you realise you must use the railways in connection with your general policy, and then turn around and say you want to control it, but in order to get what you want you give over the control to a Commissioner, which will prevent you from carrying out that policy which the Minis-

ter says he desires. The Minister goes on :—

"I want to see our railways used to the greatest possible extent in the development of the country, and I think it would be a mistake for us to go back to the system of political control, though I must say that during the years I have been in charge of the department I have not been worried by members in connection with the employment or dismissal of employees. However, it is always possible that there may be a recurrence of the system that prevailed in Victoria and New South Wales in the old days."

Members will see the Minister's argument that Commissioner control will prevent political influence, and that political influence can only be in connection with the employees. He goes on to state that political influence has not been carried on in Western Australia, but that what has happened in New South Wales and Victoria may happen here, therefore he makes provision against it in the Bill.

The Minister for Railways: A lot more than employees and workmen.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is to be regretted the Minister did not advance that argument when he was speaking. I felt when he was speaking that it was unfair to harp on the point that political control starts and finishes with a member trying to get a man a job. I am glad the Minister recognises that there are other forms of political influence brought to bear outside that referred to. I admit there is some weight in the argument that if Commissioner control did away with political influence, that the system is desirable; but it does not. The Minister said that himself distinctly. He stated in his speech that political influence was brought to bear in connection with the railways at the time the railways were under Mr. George's control. The Minister goes on to state:—

"When the Government desire that freights should be altered or that any alteration should be made in connection with what we may term the policy of the railways, the Government should on all occasions be compelled to take the full responsibility. When we al-

tered the timber freights I saw in many of the newspapers strictures upon the Commissioner; and when we altered the grain freights the Commissioner was again criticised; but in both instances the Commissioner was antagonistic to the reductions."

Was it not political influence that was brought to bear on the present Minister to reduce the freights on grain?

The Minister for Railways: I want it emphasised clearly in the Act that the Government have the power.

Mr. JOHNSON: I want to use the remarks of the Minister to prove that during the time we had Commissioner control there was political influence brought to bear of such a nature, and to a much graver danger, than the influence the Minister referred to in getting a man a job. Take two arguments, the reduction of the grain freights first. Was not political influence brought to bear on the Government to reduce grain freights? Did not deputations wait on the Minister bringing influence to bear in connection with the railway freights for the carriage of grain? When the grain freights were reduced a great wrong was done. The whole of the surroundings in connection with the reduction of grain freights demonstrate that political influence was brought to bear at that time. Let us take the timber freights. Was not political influence brought to bear to reduce the freights on timber against the wish of the Commissioner? It was pointed out by the Commissioner that if the freights were reduced on the carriage of timber there would be a loss of £16,000. We find that it is wrong for political influence to be brought to bear to get a man a job at 8s. a day, but it is all right when it is brought to bear and used to give to the Combine £16,000. This is political influence. It is useless for the Minister to argue that we can by Commissioner control do away with political influence. This is not all the political influence that one can refer to. Have we not in this House seen political influence brought to bear in connection with the price of Collie coal and repeatedly? I will give a quotation showing political influence was brought to bear of an undesirable nature in connection

with the manufacture of rolling stock. Here is an instance where the Commissioner appealed to the Minister to allow him to manufacture rolling stock at Midland Junction to save £7,000, but political influence was brought to bear. The contractors brought political influence to bear, or they stated they did in their very letters. And although the Commissioner made a special appeal to the Minister to allow the rolling stock to be made at Midland Junction to save £7,000 of the State's money, the Minister went against him and decided to give the work to private enterprise. Let me read some of the letters for they are of great interest when going into the question of political influence. Here is a letter sent to Mr. George by Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie on the 18th October, 1905. I will read that portion dealing with political influence, because I do not want to take up the time of the House unnecessarily. Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie wrote as follows:—

"My directors have asked me to write you officially, expressing their keen disappointment at the view that you have taken regarding the building of these brakevans. They have also asked me to point out that, after building works in this State for the manufacture of rolling-stock, and also carrying out successfully a contract for the construction of eighteen (18) first-class suburban railway carriages (the building of which within the State must surely have been an advantage to the country), that they hoped more encouragement would have been given to the private enterprise of this industry, and also that if our tender compared favourably with the open competitions, viz. the English or foreign tenders, to which our tender was subjected, it would only be fair—every thing being equal—that we should get the order. In conclusion, I may add that our directors have given this matter their closest and most serious consideration, and you will readily understand that, after spending such a large amount in starting an industry such as ours, what the loss means to our company of losing any one order the Railway Department have to give. I sin-

cerely trust that, after you have given this matter your further consideration, that you will be able to see your way clear to place the order for these brakevans with my company."

Mr. George replied (I am quoting from his letter) as follows:—

"You will remember that Mr. Hudson, sen., offered to make the order at 10 per cent. less than the previous cost of a similar van made in England and erected in this State. Had the order been placed with you at that price, your figure would have been, say, one thousand pounds (£1,000). You are now asking fourteen hundred pounds (£1,400). Either you would have fallen in very heavily under the first offer, or your price must be wrong entirely today. Nothing has been done with these brakevans and I intend to place the matter before the Government as soon as they have the time. I believe that you have already approached them on the matter, which I hardly understand, and would imply that you considered you were not receiving justice at my hands."

There is a distinct statement by the Commissioner of Railways that political influence was brought to bear by Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie.

The Minister for Railways: He wrote to me.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is political influence: you cannot call it by any other name. I will read what Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie wrote to Mr. George again. They say:—

"I am in receipt of your letter of 26th ult., in acknowledgment of mine of 18th October, containing the views of my directors. On referring to your letter to me of 2nd ult., it will be seen that you say: 'I find that, even then, the price is far in excess of what is considered a fair price by the Department, that I cannot do otherwise than decide to make the vans departmentally.' "

Mr. George did not calculate on the political influence that was to be brought to bear. He told Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie that he was going to do the work departmentally, but political influence was

brought to bear and Mr. George had to back down. He goes on to say:—

"On the 26th October, you say: 'Nothing has been done with these brakevans, and I intend to place the matter before the Government as soon as they have the time. Your statement that our action in approaching the Government would imply that we considered you were not giving us justice is unwarranted, your own decision, as conveyed in your letter of 2nd ult., allowing us no alternative but to urge our claim in other quarters.'"

There is political influence, "as your letter allowed us no alternative but to urge our claim in other quarters;" in other words, to use political influence in order to get that which Mr. George said they should not get because their tender was in excess of what was a fair price, and in doing the work departmentally he could save £7,000. There was political influence directly costing the country £7,000. Then we find right through, the Commissioner of Railways making a determined effort to try and stop political influence from delaying the work and preventing him from having it done departmentally. But political influence prevailed. Mr. George had to back down from his position and the work was done, one half by the department and the other half by Messrs. Hudson and Ritchie. After all was finished Mr. George concludes one of his minutes to the Minister as follows:—

"Really, the actual saving to the State, if the five made at Rocky Bay had been made at the workshops, would be £500 per van, or, even if the B. cost is not allowed, £424 per van."

The B. cost refers to the interest and sinking fund which were not calculated; and when he states £500 would be the cost per van, this must absolutely convince the House that we did lose £7,000 because of the political influence. Mr. George farther states:—

"In any case sufficient extra money has been expended in the Rocky Bay vans which would give us two extra vans at the least. There would have been extra saving effected if ten vans had been built, instead of five."

In other words, had not political influence

been brought to bear in regard to the manufacture of A.J. brake vans we should have had two more vans running on our railways to-day. That is political influence, and it was brought to bear when we had Commissioner control. How can anyone argue that by having Commissioner control we do away with political influence? It is true that under the present Railways Act members of Parliament cannot approach the Commissioner in connection with the employees. But it is done. The Minister is approached in connection with the employees and consequently, under the Act, although it states distinctly members cannot approach the Commissioner, and that the Commissioner shall have absolute control of the employees, certain people can approach the Minister and the Commissioner, and certain employees are retained in the service while others are dismissed. Political influence is brought to bear. I know of one illustration and I will mention it.

The Minister for Railways: Mention it.

Mr. JOHNSON: I will mention one remarkable occurrence. There was a loco. foreman at Kalgoorlie, and he was told to go to Geraldton and was transferred there. We find that although the loco. foreman went there, he did not stay long, if he ever went there. He was brought back and is in Kalgoorlie to-day. I want a denial that political influence was not brought to bear in connection with that officer.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know anything whatever, in any shape or form, of the circumstances mentioned. I do not know if what the member says occurred.

Mr. JOHNSON: I do not say that any influence was brought to bear on the Minister. But I want an absolute statement that political influence was not brought to bear in some direction to prevent that officer from going from Kalgoorlie to Geraldton, as he was instructed to do by the departmental head.

Mr. Bolton: Does not the officer keep an hotel?

Mr. JOHNSON: He is keeping something of that sort at present; but that is a side issue. I use this case as an illustra-

tion of political influence under the present system, to show that there is no argument against Ministerial control in the Minister's statement that we have more political influence under Ministerial than under Commissioner control. As a matter of fact, the illustration I have quoted should prove that we have had more political influence during the control of the Commissioner than we have ever had previously ; and if we have a good strong Minister, he will not tolerate political influence ; he will not allow members of Parliament to dictate to him. And I do not think the present Minister would tolerate that. He goes on to state that members have not tried it so far as he is concerned. But he has allowed outside political parties, and possibly political parties inside the House, to influence him to interfere with the general management of the railways ; because we find freights reduced on grain, freights reduced on timber, and both these reductions made against the recommendation and in opposition to the protest of the Commissioner of Railways. Consequently we have political influence.

The Premier : Also the matter of Sunday time.

Mr. Scaddan : Also the increase of pay. Mention everything while you are about it.

Mr. JOHNSON : Yes ; I quote the matter of Sunday time ; and I thank the Premier for giving me that as an illustration of political influence. The Premier agrees that political influence was brought to bear in that matter ; that the Government interfered in a matter which the Act distinctly states shall be solely under the Commissioner's control.

The Premier : Where ?

Mr. JOHNSON : The time of the employees is absolutely under the control of the Commissioner.

The Premier : Parliament has to find the money to pay them.

Mr. JOHNSON : That is true ; and Parliament should have a say as to how they shall be employed, what shall be the conditions of labour, and that there shall be no dismissing a man at 9s. a day and taking him on next day at 7s. But no brighter instance of political influence

could be given than that given by the Premier himself, who admits that such influence was brought to bear under Commissioner control. And what farther argument is needed to prove that under any system of control we shall have political influence, if the Minister or the Ministry of the day will tolerate it ?

Mr. A. J. Wilson : The only difference is that under Commissioner control the influence would not be apparent.

Mr. JOHNSON : Yes ; the question is to discriminate between good and bad political influence. When the Combine wants a bonus of £1,600, in the opinion of the hon. member it is good ; but when the employees want political influence to back up their protest against being reduced to 7s. a day, the hon. member would say that was bad influence.

The Premier : Where is the consistency of your strong support of Commissioner control of the public service ?

Mr. JOHNSON : The public service is not on all fours with the Railway Department.

The Premier : You say you object to political influence.

Mr. JOHNSON : That is not my sole argument in favour of Ministerial control. I was using certain illustrations to combat the argument, and the only argument used by the Minister, against Ministerial control. But there is no analogy between the Public Service Commissioner controlling civil servants and the Commissioner controlling a large revenue-earning department that has cost ten millions sterling and that earns between one and a half and two millions annually. I have no more to say on that question ; but I intend when we reach the Committee stage to move an amendment to test the opinion of members ; and I venture to believe that I shall have a large measure of support from the Government side of the House. I have been asked to quote from a speech by the Attorney General while he was a private member. He said :—

"The position to-day was that the Minister apparently could only act as an onlooker in many respects. The Minister's hands were tied when it came to carrying out requirements urged by

the House, and he found himself effectively blocked by the Commissioner." No doubt, therefore, the Attorney General would assist me to secure Ministerial control, were he not a Minister of the Crown. No doubt Cabinet have compelled him to alter his opinions on that matter. But I look with all confidence to the member for Swan (Mr. Gull), who must realise that the only method of developing his portion of the country, or the interest in which he is concerned, is to use the railways for that purpose; and the only method of using them for that purpose is to place them under the control of this House, and to let the House decide what shall be the departmental policy. Again, the member for Greenough (Mr. Stone) will support me. We know that the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piessé) has expressed opinions directly in favour of Ministerial control, and that the member for Collie (Mr. Ewing) did likewise. As a matter of fact, last session he went to the extent of moving a motion directly in favour of Ministerial control, and, as the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton) points out, had not it been for the special appeal of the Minister on that occasion, when he was out of order in making the appeal, the division which would otherwise have been taken would have passed the motion, and on the instruction of that motion there would have been a Bill to-day to introduce absolute Ministerial control. I have one or two other matters to deal with. I wish again to enter my protest against the method that has been adopted by the present acting Commissioner of effecting economies by devoting his special attention to retrenching, dismissing, and disrating the lower-paid employees in the railway service. And I wish to take the strongest exception to the action taken by the acting Commissioner, or by somebody else, in dismissing cleaners. I brought up this question on the Estimates. Firemen who were receiving 9s. a day have been retrenched and made cleaners and paid only 7s. a day, when in nearly all cases the other cleaners receive 8s. a day. Not only that, but in every branch of the department we find that men employed at 8s. or 9s. a day are dismissed; and a

day or so later their services are required. They are then taken into the service, but employed at 7s. a day. Only to-day, I received a letter from an employee of the railway service, pointing out what has been done in the Ways and Works branch. I will read the letter so that members may realise that the present system of retrenchment is absolutely unfair. It is a sweating system, exactly the same as carried out by the Ministry in connection with the messengers and clerks of this House. The department use the men to fill the same positions, but pay them at reduced rates when they are reinstated. That is a miserable policy to pursue—to dismiss a man filling a position at 8s. or 9s. a day, and then reinstate him to-morrow to do exactly the same work, and pay him 7s. a day. [*Mr. Stone: Why does he go back?*] The hon. member knows full well the number of unemployed we have; and as long as the present Government receive the loyal and servile support of the hon. member, so long shall we have men unemployed.

Mr. Stone: Our railways cost more than any other railways in the world; and while people like you talk as they do, the railways are likely to cost as much.

Mr. JOHNSON: I will read the letter for the information of the House, as it distinctly proves that what I have stated is true of the working railways. My informant writes:—

"I am writing to you on the matter of some of the labourers at the Ways and Works branch of the Working Railways at Midland Junction. When His Honour Mr. Justice Parker was sitting in the Arbitration Court he made an award that 7s. per day should be the minimum rate; but he expressed a hope that the employer would not take advantage of it, as he did not consider that 7s. was a fair day's wage. Ever since then, the Ways and Works branch at Midland Junction have started their men at 7s. per day. One man who had worked there for eight or nine years and received 8s. was put off on account of slackness of work some two or three months back,

but was given work last week, and had to start at 7s. per day."

There is an illustration. An employee works for nine years, receives 8s. per day, is put off, is reinstated at the same work, and receives 7s. per day. As has been previously pointed out, that is the action of a sweater. That is the course the sweater always adopts—to dismiss a man, and then, when he knows that the market is overstocked, that unemployment is common, he reinstates the man at a reduced wage, or otherwise takes advantage of the overstocked market in order to reduce wages. That is being done in our working railways, and the time has arrived when we should if we can use political influence to find a remedy.

Mr. Foulkes : The letter does not say he was put on to do the same work.

Mr. JOHNSON : It states distinctly that he was put on to do exactly the same work at 7s. per day ; and the member for North Fremantle (*Mr. Bolton*) points out that not only do the men receive a shilling a day less, but their continuity of service is broken, and they are thus robbed of the holidays to which they would be entitled had they been allowed to continue. It would be far better to reduce them and let their services be continuous, so that they should receive proper holidays. The whole method is wrong, and it is not a method that would be endorsed by the House if members knew exactly what was going on ; and I venture to say the Minister himself would not tolerate this sort of thing, because it is the method of the sweater, and economies of this sort will not tend to improve the condition of this country, and certainly will not tend to improve the condition of the Ministry, who should not allow the lower-paid officers to be victimised.

The Minister for Railways : You raised a big row when one of the highly paid employees was dismissed, a little while ago.

Mr. JOHNSON : I do not remember ever raising a protest against any dismissal.

The Minister : I do.

Mr. JOHNSON : Unless the officer was robbed of some recognition to which

he was entitled for long service. I object to a man's being dismissed and getting only a fortnight's pay for every year of service, when under the regulations he is entitled to one month's pay for every year. I shall always protest against injustice.

The Minister : He is not entitled to anything of the sort.

Mr. JOHNSON : I contend that he is, and the Attorney General stated from his seat in this House during the present session that such a man is entitled to a month's pay for every year ; that any officer who has served sixteen years in the Government service is entitled to one month's salary for every year of service. And the Minister for Railways knows that I have shown him in *Hansard* the statement of the Attorney General. Not only that, it has been a recognised rule for years past that employees dismissed after fifteen years service are entitled to a month's salary for each year. Not only do we find these men in the Ways and Works dismissed and re-engaged at a reduced rate, but, as I pointed out on the Estimates, this is done with the firemen. They are reduced to cleaners ; and it would not be so bad if they were reduced to cleaners at 8s. a day ; but they are paid only 7s. As a matter of fact, the department are dismissing all their general labourers in rotation, gradually but continually ; and the system is to bring down the maximum rate from 8s. which prevails to-day to 7s. I trust the Minister will make inquiries into this. The practice does prevail. No doubt the Minister will say he has no knowledge of it, but I have told him to-night and I have given some illustrations, so that I trust he will see the practice is not allowed in the future. We find also that the examiners of our rolling stock are dismissed. We know that in this connection a penny-wise-and-pound-foolish policy prevails. Rolling stock is going out, through not being examined, in a state in which it should not be allowed to go out. It goes hundreds of miles away and is hung up ; and then we have the driver, the fireman, and guard all sitting on their train unable to proceed owing to the bad state of the rolling stock. This costs us thous-

ands ; it is hard to say what it costs the State ; but to save a pound or two this policy is allowed to continue. It has happened time after time, and it will always continue as long as we continue to allow trains to go without being thoroughly examined by examiners. Apart from the goods trains, it is absolutely unsafe for the travelling public. It is quite possible, owing to the retrenchment of hands to examine goods trains, that they may neglect to examine the passenger trains. The member for North Fremantle interjects that they do.

Mr. Bolton : They have not the men, they cannot examine them.

Mr. JOHNSON : Then it is a very serious matter. I told the Minister that there was very grave danger in allowing the Acting Commissioner of Railways to starve our permanent way, and possibly there will be a big railway smash some of these days and the responsibility will be on the shoulders of the Minister ; but not only is there danger in starving the permanent way, there is also greater danger in allowing rolling stock to go out without being properly examined. When an accident happens the Minister will realise, with all seriousness, the foolishness of this policy. We want economies, but we do not want economies of this description. Such economies are a penny-wise-and-pound-foolish policy. It will cost the State thousands of pounds through a big smash-up owing to the starving of the permanent way and the neglect to examine rolling stock before it goes out. There is just one other matter that I wish to mention in conclusion. I do not intend to speak at any great length upon it now, because I intend to raise it in the Committee stage ; but I question the wisdom of continuing the present policy that has been in existence many years, of allowing the Commissioner to control the expenditure of loan moneys as well as revenue. I have raised this point previously in this House, I raise it now, and I intend to have it discussed in Committee. I contend that in a large revenue earning concern like the railways the Manager or Commissioner should not be allowed to handle loan moneys. *Mr. George* has stated in his minutes that

there is a danger of the "marriage of funds." If there be that danger in connection with our Midland Junction workshops, there is just as much in connection with the general working of our railways.

Mr. Foulkes : How does this amendment Bill affect that ?

Mr. JOHNSON : It allows it to continue. As a matter of fact, the Auditor General in his reports has time and time again drawn attention to this fact ; and anyone who takes an intelligent interest in the railway system must recognise the danger of allowing those in control of our railways to control revenue expenditure and at the same time to control loan expenditure. I know that there are years when Ministers have adopted a very objectionable practice. It does not apply to one Minister only, it applies to several. At the end of the financial year, realising that the year has been a bad one, they have revised the whole of the railway expenditure, and works that have been done out of revenue have been transferred to loan and vice versa. That has been done time and time again.

The Minister for Railways : The hon. member can speak with authority on that point.

Mr. JOHNSON : I admit it was done during several years, but what I want to do is to get away from that. It is an objectionable feature ; because the position is that the Minister comes along during the financial year and agrees to certain expenditure, not being competent to discriminate as to whether the work should be done from loan or revenue—I defy any Minister to say that he is in a position to decide that point—but when it comes to the end of the financial year and the Minister finds the accounts are in a bad way, he gets experts to go into the question and say where loan works have been charged to revenue and where revenue works have been charged to loan ; and repeatedly there has been a readjustment of accounts ; and while there can be readjustment of accounts it goes to prove that it is a dangerous practice. The Auditor General is justified when he says in his reports that we cannot decide exactly what are the returns from the operations of the working railways ; and

we will never know it as long as we permit the present practice of allowing the expenditure of both loan and revenue moneys to be controlled by the Manager or Commissioner. I intend to move in the Committee stage to test the feelings of the House on this point. I would like to see the Minister control revenue and loan, but to have the power to send for the Engineer-in-Chief, or somebody who is an authority on the question as to what should be charged to loan and what to revenue, and an authority on works generally, so that he can advise as to which account the item should be charged to.

Mr. Foulkes : And who is to decide the question ?

Mr. JOHNSON : The Minister can get both sides of the question, and then of course he will have an authority on one side and very likely an assertion made on the other ; but he has some experts to assist him in going into the question. He is at present totally incompetent to criticise the expenditure on our working railways. No Minister can decide which is loan and which is revenue expenditure.

Mr. Walker : Why not consult the Auditor General ?

Mr. JOHNSON : I do not think he would be a fit person to come in. After all it is an expert that is required to go into the expenditure, and I would rather see the Engineer-in-Chief consulted on the question, because he would be an authority and could tell at once whether a work was capital account or whether it was a revenue work. If this is done, the Minister will have some protection, and Parliament will have some proper account of the operations of the railways, and the country would know exactly what our railways are earning. To-day we do not know that, and we will never know it while the system of expenditure is allowed to continue. That is all I have to say on the second reading. I must say I am pleased the Minister brought forward this Bill before he did anything in connection with our railway system. It is true that he gave a promise last session that he would do this, but promises are not always kept. On this occasion the promise has been kept, and I congratulate

the Minister on keeping it. I trust in conclusion that we will have members taking an intelligent interest in this question and a serious view of the relative merits of control, and above everything that they will try to take an intelligent interest in the question of revenue and loan expenditure ; because until this question is settled we can never get a return to this House that can prove the value of the operations of our working railways.

On motion by *Mr. Bath*, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1907-8.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous sitting, *Mr. Daghish* in the Chair.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (Hon. J. Price, Minister).

Vote—*Public Works and Buildings*, £215,394 :

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price) in introducing these Estimates said : The expenditure of the Public Works Department for the year naturally falls under three heads, revenue, loan, and Sale of Government Property Trust Account. I do not want to unduly delay the Committee in my opening remarks, so I propose to deal absolutely and entirely with the revenue side of the Public Works Department's operations, because opportunity will occur later on for discussing those great loan works the department is carrying out, when the Loan Estimates are before the House. I would like to mention, however, that on these Revenue Estimates are included all salaries, and many of the officers receiving the same are engaged largely in connection with carrying out loan works. Therefore, from time to time, it will be almost impossible to abstain from making any reference to loan proposals, but I will endeavour to be as brief as I possibly can. Last year the Public Works Department spent from revenue, £192,977 ; from loan, £713,867 ; and from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £41,983. The revenue expenditure was divided as follows : Public buildings, £79,503 ; harbours and rivers, £9,479 ;

departmental, £14,604 ; roads and bridges, £66,148 ; water supply, £16,224 ; and miscellaneous, £7,019 ; making a total of £192,977. If we compare the total expenditure last year by the Public Works Department with the expenditure of the preceding years we find that the total expenditure for 1904 was £1,117,617 ; that for 1905 was £903,654 ; and that for the first six months of 1906 was £456,080 ; while the expenditure for 1906-7 was £948,827, an excess of some £45,000 above the expenditure of 1905. Last year on the Revenue Estimates we got through fairly well with our works, leaving very few either uncommenced or uncompleted. As a matter of fact, we had an unexpended balance at the end of the year of £35,954, as against an unexpended balance in 1905-6 of £71,834, and in 1904-5 of £49,570. On last year's Estimates we had 208 revenue works provided for, of which 185 were either completed or put in hand during the year. On this year's Estimates we have some 216 works. When introducing the Works Estimates last year I stated I hoped it would be possible to get the administrative cost of the department down to something like seven per cent. per annum. This has hardly been realised, but still we have brought it down considerably below the year before. The administrative cost of the department in 1903-4 was 6.03 per cent. ; in 1904-5 7.65 per cent. ; in 1905-6, 9.28 per cent. ; and in the past year 7.81. It will be noted by the Estimates that there is a considerable decrease for the temporary assistance vote ; that is to say, £8,000 for 1907-8 as against an expenditure of £6,144 for 1906-7. That is not a bad sign, because there has been a diminution in the number of permanent officers and the services of those engaged temporarily can be dispensed with without any difficulty, when the works programme under the loan account is nearing completion. During the course of the year we supervised a good deal of Commonwealth work, and received £1,408 10s. 1d. for such supervision. To that extent our salaries and contingency votes are reduced. I would refer to a matter which is very often overlooked in considering the work of

this department, and that is that the Works Department supervise practically all land resumptions for the State, and also have to deal with tenancies. We controlled 340 tenancies last year in connection with which rent amounting to £7,720 9s. was collected. In the course of the year we were able, owing to the difference between the insurance offices—it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good—to fix a most favourable policy for the insurance of the public buildings of the State. We succeeded in insuring all the public buildings—with the exception of those connected with the Railway Department—having a capital value of £1,650,000, at 1s. per cent. per annum for three years. A careful valuation was made of the buildings. We first made an agreement with the companies to insure something like £1,500,000 worth, but it was subsequently found that it was necessary to insure for an additional £150,000.

Mr. Bath : Does the insurance policy contain the repudiation clause ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That matter was carefully settled, and there is no question of repudiation, as far as this policy is concerned. At the end of 1907 there were 99 roads boards in existence, and as members know the Works Department stand *in loco parentis* towards those boards. In the past, it has been a source of great complaint that many of the roads boards have not been as fully sensible of their responsibilities as they should have been ; but there has been a continuous growth of the amount of local revenue raised by these local authorities. In 1903-4 the total revenue raised locally by all roads boards was £13,116, and in that year there were 44 boards in the State that struck no rate at all. In 1904-5 the revenue raised locally by the boards had increased to £21,144, and there were then 16 boards not rating. In 1905-6 the revenue had farther increased to £28,009, with eight roads boards not rating.

Mr. Walker : That shows the steady progress of settlement.

The MINISTER: Not altogether that, for it is shown by the figures that the number of roads boards which do not

strike rates is steadily diminishing. Last year, for instance, we had no road board which did not strike a rate, and the local amount raised was £34,268. This indicates to my mind two things, firstly that progress is going on in the country districts; and secondly, that by the diminution of non-rating boards the local authorities are seized to a greater extent than in the past of their responsibilities in this respect. I do not think it can be considered that, in contributing £34,268 last year, practically the whole of the mining, pastoral, agricultural and horticultural areas were unduly burdened by local rating. I anticipate that this year a still farther increase will take place in that direction. I have frankly to recognise that in many districts there are men who give a considerable amount of time, without fee or reward, in doing good service for the various districts. On the whole, the boards are, I am glad to say, day by day becoming more seized of the responsibility thrown upon them in the way of local government. During the past year the engineering division were almost entirely occupied on the loan proposals of the Government. Some money, however, was spent from revenue, for we expended something like £11,868 on harbours and rivers, and £16,184 on water supply and drainage. While on that topic I would like to say that sometimes to listen to the speeches—I will not say of members opposite—of a good many of our critics, one would think that the whole of the public buildings of this State were being built from loan funds.

Mr. Bath: There is very little provided this year from revenue.

The MINISTER: Last year the expenditure from revenue on public buildings was £82,240.

Mr. Bath: Does that include repairs?

The MINISTER: Yes.

Mr. Bath: You cannot repair from loan funds.

The MINISTER: As evidence that the plans of the architectural offices have been well thought out, 177 of our contracts last year, out of a total of 198, were carried out without the slightest variation, and those variations which did take place were generally owing to the

fact that the departments interested in the various buildings came along after the tenders had been let with alterations, or requests for increased accommodation. It may be of interest to members, who when discussing the Estimates have possibly been displeased with the Minister for Works because he has not done more for their particular district, to know that during the year 41 members put in requests, and that the departmental funds would have been trenched upon to the extent of £146,835 if the whole of these requests had been granted. Members will see therefore it is utterly impossible for everyone's requirements to be met.

Mr. Scaddan: I asked for £6 worth.

The MINISTER: There has been one very useful work which has expanded considerably last year, and that has been the system of boring in agricultural areas. Until recently this was carried out almost exclusively to the east of the Great Southern Railway. The year commenced with one party out, but since the close of the financial year we have had five parties in the field. There have been 123 bores put down in country which in most cases had been regarded as almost hopeless, and in 27 cases we struck good fresh water, in 26 cases good stock water, and in the balance the result was either blank or salt water. These boring operations have led to a considerable increase in the amount of settlement in country districts. The putting down of one bore alone resulted in the settlement of 7,000 acres of land in the vicinity. This year there is an apparent decrease in the amount of the general vote for roads boards. We have the sum of £35,000 on the Estimates, showing an apparent decrease of £6,006 as compared with the amount allocated last year. It must not be forgotten, however, that in addition to the general vote of £35,000, we have an item of £5,000 for roads to act as feeders for the agricultural railways. If this item is added the decrease as compared with last year is about £1,000. I trust that members will recognise that in putting aside £5,000 for roads to act as feeders to the agricultural railways the department have taken a wise step. It would be of little use to build these lines, which frequently run at right

angles to constructed lines, unless we were prepared to spend a certain amount to fix up stations and sidings with the necessary road communication.

Mr. Scaddan: You said these railways were to be built in lieu of roads.

The MINISTER: I never said anything of the kind, and I never thought it.

Mr. Foulkes: In the Forrest administration large sums were spent in this way.

The MINISTER: If I follow in the footsteps of Sir John Forrest, I am following a good example. I would refer incidentally to the fact that some time ago a promise was given to the House that the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act would not be proclaimed until Parliament had an opportunity of reviewing it. There are one or two slight amendments necessary to this Act which I propose to bring down in a day or two, more particularly with the object of giving right of access to private property in connection with house mains. The sewerage works are well on the way and members will have an opportunity of discussing them on the Loan Estimates. As far as the water supply is concerned, members will recollect that the Metropolitan Waterworks Board comes under the supervision of the Minister for Works. It was recognised in the early part of the year that there was a possibility of supplies becoming short this year before there was any chance of obtaining a farther supply from the hills, and it was determined to put down a bore in Loftus Street. That bore was put down and water was struck at a more shallow depth than in any other bore. There is now a supply of 1,106,000 gallons a day from that bore. For bore water the supply is exceptionally good. I am not going to say that bore water is the best to be obtained, for I do not think it is, and I do not believe the metropolitan area should be satisfied with it. We should have a better supply than that, and the Government will give earnest consideration to the question of obtaining a larger supply in the near future from the hills. But the idea that bore water is deleterious to the public health is absolutely a mistake. I would like to inform the House that week

by week the water is bacteriologically examined by the Government Bacteriologist. We have three waters being used, some together and sometimes separately, and he examines them carefully and is not able to find any deleterious matter at all. May I point out in order that this question may be finally set at rest that in the early part of the year the Government determined to appoint a board to consider the question of a hills supply for Perth. That board duly sat and reported, I think in the beginning of October; and the report will be ready for distribution at the end of this week. I cannot let this matter pass without some reference to remarks which were made in another place. It was suggested by a member of another House that influence was brought to bear on this board to report in the direction the Government desired; and the hon. member made use of these words:—

“It is hard to say; but the chairman and some of the board have been influenced. I read a copy of a minute written by the Minister for Works on the 12th January, 1907, to the Premier, which speaks for itself and is as follows: ‘If approval of these gentlemen can be obtained to the Government proposals it will do much to disarm future criticism.’”

It is a pity the member only read an extract from that minute. I would much sooner he had read the minute altogether, and I may inform members that it is a minute which I wrote to the Premier impressing upon him the desirability of appointing a board to report on the question. There were great differences of opinion on the matter, and it would stand scrutiny. I recommended this course to the Premier, and in doing so I used these words:—

“As the general plans in connection with the water supply of Perth from the Canning are now practically completed, I think it would be desirable that a committee of engineers should be asked to investigate the departmental proposals on all such matters as the capacity of the proposed reservoir, the design for the weir, the type of main, the financial aspect of the question, and any other items which it may be thought

desirable subsequently to submit to it. I would suggest that all or some of the following gentlemen might be asked to form such committee."

Here follow the seven names I suggested. The number was afterwards cut down to five, and the two gentlemen cut out were two men who were practically Government officers. I then went on to say:—

"If the approval of these gentlemen can be obtained to the Government proposals it will do much to disarm future criticism. My suggestion is not for a permanent board which would in any way interfere with the work while under construction, but simply for a committee of experts to whom the general proposals can be submitted before final adoption by the Government."

That is the extent of the influence brought to bear on this board. If our proposal found favour with an independent board and they endorsed our proposal, it would do a great deal to disarm public criticism. That was the idea. The personnel of that board was a sufficient guarantee that those gentlemen could not be influenced; and if there had been any attempt on the part of the Government to influence that board, is it likely that at the present moment there would be a disagreement between three members of the board and myself as to their remuneration? If there had been any impropriety on my part, or any endeavour to unduly influence these gentlemen, is it not reasonable to suppose I practically would be prepared to pay what they demanded? As a matter of fact I challenge anyone to investigate this question, to examine the members of that board and ask them if they had the slightest influence brought to bear on them, either by myself or any member of the Ministry to influence them in what direction they should report. As a matter of fact, when Mr. Barrett, the town engineer of Fremantle, left the State and went away, Mr. Newbold was appointed in his place. Mr. Newbold was appointed by me when I well knew that Mr. Newbold was prejudiced in favour of continuing the bore water supply; and I felt that if he went on that board he at all events would examine the Government proposals with a critical eye.

Mr. Johnson: The question is, was he competent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: All I have to inform members is that Mr. Newbold is highly spoken of by the other members of the board. They were surprised at the amount of practical experience he brought to bear. Mr. Newbold was appointed to take Mr. Barrett's place, not that the council were bound by his views any more than the Perth Council were bound by the views of Mr. Haynes; but as these two councils were vitally interested, I thought it was desirable there should be someone associated with each council who could explain the matter under discussion. Mr. Newbold is not a hydraulic engineer, but he has had a great acquaintance with engineering matters and suited by training to grasp those technical questions discussed by the engineers. There is just one other scheme which we control, the Goldfields Water Supply. Our return last year was not as good as was anticipated by reason of the fact that at the end of the summer heavy rains fell in Kalgoorlie and on the goldfields generally, which brought down our consumption. This year there is every indication of a substantial increase in the consumption. As a matter of fact, this year we have extended the operations of the scheme along the Great Southern Railway to York and Beverley, and we believe and hope we shall be able to keep our promise to the people of those two towns to have the water supplies open there in January. I have nothing farther to add: I do not want to delay the Committee longer. I assure members that so far as I could, in allocating these amounts, I have endeavoured to deal impartially with the districts concerned. I would like to point out this year that by far the great majority of works have been carefully reported on by Government officers. Now and then we had to avail ourselves of the local "policeman," but I would like to assure the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) that this has not been the rule. We have as far as we could, and this has not been done before, got members' requests in as early as possible and some 75 per cent. of the requests were distributed amongst Government officers, and reported

on. Although the expenditure from revenue this year perhaps is somewhat smaller than in past years, I am able to assure the Committee that no unnecessary work is down, and there is not one which I cannot fully justify.

[General discussion followed.]

Mr. T. H. BATH: One would think, to listen to the Minister for Works and the easy and airy manner in which he dismissed the various items under his control, that everything in the Public Works garden was looking simply lovely. He noticed the Minister was very anxious to postpone any criticism in regard to the loan expenditure side of the Public Works Department until the Loan Estimates were before Parliament, which would be just at the time when probably the session would be jammed into the last few days before Christmas. Then the Minister no doubt relied on the hope that the Opposition would temper the wind to the shorn lamb. There was no question about our being in order in dealing with the various matters of Public Works administration. One had only to refer to what might be termed the skeleton in the cupboard of the Minister for Works, the sewerage scheme, to at once indicate what a fruitful source of criticism the Loan Estimates of the Minister would be. Dealing first with the revenue side of the Public Works Estimates—one found only what was to be expected in view of the financial policy pursued by the Government and their immediate predecessors; that was, so far as the amount available was concerned it had been practically cut down, but no reduction in administrative cost in the ordinary every-day expenditure which was essential in the upkeep of public buildings which were utilised by the various departments of State. We found, for instance, the Minister for Works presenting himself with a certificate of merit in regard to his expenditure on public works last year. He pointed out that although the finances were straitened the Government actually expended the enormous sum of £80,000 on public works in this State. But did the Minister reflect that it was only a few years ago that the Government could find six times that amount out of the revenue

of the State to expend on public works?

The Minister for Works: On public buildings?

Mr. BATH: And on public buildings. It was only since the advent of the financial geniuses who comprised the present Government and their immediate predecessors that they found it necessary to resort to loan moneys to construct asylums, art galleries and depôts for the aged of the State.

The Premier: Was not an asylum a legitimate charge on loans?

Mr. BATH: Most decidedly not.

The Premier: It was a work that would last for years.

Mr. BATH: The rule in Western Australia, and a very good rule too, that had been laid down by previous Treasurers was that loan moneys should only be expended on reproductive works.

Mr. Gordon: Did that apply to the rabbit-proof fence?

The Premier: They had not a sinking fund there.

Mr. BATH was talking about the rule in Western Australia. If the asylum for the insane—and this ought to be interesting to the member for Canning (Mr. Gordon)—were a reproductive work, then he (Mr. Bath) would have to readjust his views as to what comprised reproductive works and what did not. He noticed by the Estimates that the Minister for Works had done a bit of financial juggling to show an apparent saving in administrative cost, for one found, although the total amount for salaries was an increase on the vote of last year, and an increase also in expenditure, yet by allocating a larger amount this year to loan expenditure the Minister made it appear that whereas for 1907-8 he was only to expend £13,000 from revenue on salaries, in 1906-7 he expended £14,996, making it appear that he had effected a saving of £2,000 in administrative cost. It was indicative of the straits to which the Government were put to finance their undertakings that they transferred so much to loan fund in respect of public buildings, roads, bridges and schools. But when in addition to that they transferred to loan the expenditure which had

hitherto been charged direct to consolidated revenue, it meant that not only were these unproductive works loaded up by the expenditure involved, but they were loaded with a large proportion of the salaries provided on the Works Estimates. And as the interest and sinking fund on the loan expenditure had to be provided from consolidated revenue, if it did not come from the works themselves, it was clear that if we continued this policy for a year or two we should find ourselves in the position of other States by which the same policy had been adopted. The Minister said that last year £80,000 was expended on public buildings from revenue. But the Estimates show that of the £90,000 set down this year for buildings, £29,695 was absorbed in repairs and maintenance, and £11,769 in furniture for Government buildings, making a total of £41,464, or half the amount provided for public buildings out of revenue. Therefore the Minister would provide for maintenance, repairs and furniture out of general loan fund; but considering how furniture depreciated by use, it could hardly add to the capital value of any building. Thus the amount expended on new works would be altogether infinitesimal. It was instructive to compare this year's Estimates with those submitted in 1902-3 and 1903-4, in the matter of the amounts set apart for public works from revenue, including some railways. As to the administration of the Metropolitan Water Supply Board, directly controlled by the Works Department, and the proposed new water supply for Perth, it was not clear that the reading of the whole minute of the Minister placed any different complexion on that portion of it recently quoted in the Legislative Council. It seemed that either the Minister was remarkably indiscreet in framing the telegram, and should be more careful when dictating minutes, or that those who were so anxious for the scheme to be inaugurated had so far committed themselves that the Minister did not wish to have any doubt about the report of the board. Considering the state of the finances and the obliga-

tions which must be imposed on rate-payers of the metropolitan district, there was no justification for proceeding with this elaborate scheme. We could supply the requirements of Perth for many years to come by taking the surplus available at the Mundaring Weir, where hundreds of millions of gallons were annually going to waste. This would make the goldfields scheme to a large extent profitable, and would render the new metropolitan scheme unnecessary. Certain figures were quoted to show what would be the population of Perth at certain future periods; but with reasonable efficiency and fair administration of the public departments, we should not have a metropolitan area practically eating the head off the State by an abnormal growth, but should have ports like Geraldton, Bunbury, Albany, and Busselton, each serving its own locality, and avoiding the necessity for concentrating all our expenditure in the metropolitan area and building up here a huge population at the expense of the rest of the State. Centralisation was too prominent a feature of life in the Eastern States, and was not in the interest of the community generally. The returns for the current financial year showed that the consumption of water from the goldfields scheme was increasing; but the Minister might state approximately the returns being derived from subsidiary schemes.

The Minister for Works: That would be found in a paper laid on the table in another place.

Mr. BATH: In spite of adverse criticism, he was satisfied that if all the consumers paid for the water on the same basis as the ordinary householder on the goldfields, the scheme would show a much great approximation to a profit. While householders were charged 6s. 8d. per thousand gallons, certain other consumers paid rates ranging down to 2s. per thousand.

The Minister: There was a low rate for market gardeners.

Mr. BATH: It was a pity to delude people into the belief that market gardening could pay with water at 2s., when the best authorities on irrigation

held that it could not pay with water at more than 6d.

Mr. Johnson: The result was affected by the market price of the produce.

Mr. BATH: As these market gardeners competed with produce grown on the coast, where water cost nothing, the market price could not affect the question. The goldfields water should be first for the householders and for the mines; and he looked askance not only at reducing the price for goldfields irrigation, but at any scheme for supplying water at 9d. per thousand gallons nearer the coast. That price would be unprofitable. There was what was called the subsidiary capital of the scheme; and the first charge on the revenue went to pay the interest and sinking fund on the subsidiary capital. But we did not know what were the earnings of the subsidiary capital and the various schemes grafted on to the Goldfields Water Scheme. To ascertain how the loss was being incurred we had first to know what the subsidiary schemes returned to the revenue, and how much set apart as interest and sinking fund from revenue was actually paid from revenue.

The Minister: Take, for instance, Northam. When the department started to supply water there, they had a guarantee from the settlers who took the water that the department should receive a profit of ten per cent. on the expenditure.

Mr. BATH: Did the Minister assert that the settlers at Northam paid on exactly the same basis as those at Cunderdin, Kellerberrin, or Tammin? The price at Northam was 2s. 6d., and the price at Kellerberrin slightly higher. Did not the Northam supply pay better than that at Kellerberrin?

The Minister: Yes; for the consumption at Northam was by far the greater. Take the extension from Tammin or Kellerberrin. At the start the department had a guarantee of ten per cent.; but as farther consumers came in, the profit represented fifteen per cent. or twenty per cent. on the capital involved.

Mr. BATH: Did each of these installations pay?

The Minister: Yes.

Mr. BATH: One would like to have the figures.

The Minister: The hon. member could have them with pleasure.

Mr. BATH: If these schemes paid in this way there would be considerable difference in the balance-sheets of the scheme as compared with the scheme laid down originally.

The Premier: If the revenue derived from the settlers did not meet the 10 per cent., the balance was made up by the Lands Department from ordinary revenue.

Mr. BATH: That was a case of taking it out of one pocket and putting it into another.

The Premier: Nothing had been paid yet.

The MINISTER: If £2,000 was spent in reticulation, the department expected to get a return of £200. In three cases that amount was not reached. We only got say £160, and the case was put to the Lands Department and they guaranteed the difference. The amounts paid by the Lands Department were very small.

Mr. Scaddan: Was this percentage on the capital expenditure?

The Minister: Yes.

Mr. BATH: It was a great surprise to learn these reticulations along the line were paying at such high rates. In the interest of a thorough understanding of the scheme we should have these details submitted. It was only by possession of this information that members could assist the Minister in allocating the charges for water, and there would be no question of one body of consumers getting water at an unremunerative rate and perhaps at the expense of other consumers. Information would also be of interest in regard to the average consumption of the railways for some years past, the amount they had been taking from the scheme, the prices paid, and what would have been credited to the scheme if the railways had taken all their water from the scheme. There was much criticism in regard to the Railway Department because they had not utilised the scheme entirely, but we must bear in mind that considerable loan expenditure had been embarked on the construction of dams along the railway, and if the department did not utilise the

water from these dams it would be so much loan expenditure unutilised.

Mr. Scaddan: The point was that the department had procured new dams since the water scheme was inaugurated.

Mr. BATH: The only point we wanted to know was whether the State was losing by the fact that the Railway Department refused to get their entire supplies from the water scheme. There was only one other matter, and that was with regard to the roads board vote. It was £35,000 this year and out of that sum provision was made for the salary of the roads board auditors and the searcher. Last year £41,606 was expended. The reduction this year would impose a disability on those roads boards doing their duty in regard to rating; because while others not rating might suffer by the lesser subsidy, they got other consideration in the Estimates. Many grants among the items for roads and bridges were given to the roads boards, which had been criticised by the Minister and the member for Perth for not rating themselves to carry out works within their own districts; but so long as they got consideration from the Government in the shape of special grants in the Estimates every year, there was no inducement for them to rate themselves and therefore get a larger share of the subsidy. If we were going to reduce the subsidy and leave the roads boards more and more to their own resources, there would need to be a stop to the preferential treatment for new works in roads and bridges; and whatever subsidy was allotted should be allotted in proportion to the amount roads boards rated themselves. The boards should be told that if they did not rate themselves there would be no chance of getting special grants placed on the Estimates. This was a sore point with some goldfields roads boards. The member for Kanowna would probably deal with that aspect. The Kalgoorlie Roads Board had received pretty fair treatment from the Minister. They were not altogether satisfied, but they had been perhaps better dealt with by the Minister than other roads boards. The fairer plan would be to say what Parliament would vote for roads and bridges, and then to make no special grants unless it was for

opening up roads in absolutely new districts.

Mr. T. WALKER: The Leader of the Opposition had expressed his (Mr. Walker's) views. We could well leave the discussion of water supply, sewerage, filter beds and such like to the Loan Estimates. But he had seriously to complain on behalf of the out-back municipalities and roads boards that had to depend on Government assistance in the pioneer work of opening up the country. There was a persistent attempt on the part of the Works Department to put all local governing bodies on the same level; but some goldfields roads boards had to do work absolutely incredible to the people of the metropolis or larger centres. Mining propositions had to be connected by roads with civilisation in order that the prospectors could get their supplies; but that point was not taken into consideration by the department. When assistance was asked for, the department asked why these roads boards did not rate themselves. The North-East Coolgardie Roads Board had hundreds of miles to look after. Some of the roads led over old lake-beds, and causeways were necessary. Gindalbi had to be connected by a causeway over a lake, and an officer of the department who had recently reported on that work must have reported favourably.

The Minister for Works: When the hon. member saw the papers he would see he was wrong.

Mr. WALKER: Then the officer must have been unreliable. He had received a characteristic letter from the Broad Arrow-Paddington municipality strongly protesting against the proposed scale for the distribution of the municipal subsidy, because the reduction meant a serious diminution in the revenue of the municipality owing to the considerable falling off in the rental value of property. He had received similar protests from Bulong, from the North-East Coolgardie Roads Board and from the Kanowna municipality. There was a concerted effort amongst those bodies to request the Government to allow them to tax what would be taxable, so as to be independent as much as possible of the Government.

The building of the big main roads in those districts was a work of a national character. The council also made application for one-half of the publicans' licenses collected in the municipality, considering it only fair that the municipal bodies should derive some portion of the fees from public houses, especially seeing that the Government now gave no grants outside the subsidy. In response to that communication he had written to the Treasurer asking him to consider the matter. In raising this question it was not a case of a man begging for his own particular electorate, for the argument applied to all the goldfields districts. There would be deputations waiting on the Minister with a request that the Government should do something to assist miners as they were now assisting settlers. Something was being done in the country districts to enable the goldfields water supply to furnish water at a given rate on a guarantee that the department would not lose. Some such system as this was desired in order to provide water at a cheap rate for utilisation at the low grade mines. We wanted this wealth of the country utilised, and this could be achieved by a low price being charged for water. Unless this were done the low grade propositions could not be developed, and promising districts must gradually fade away. He hoped the Minister would pay attention to the very important matters brought up, for by doing so he would be benefitting the whole country; not only now but for all time.

Mr. ANGWIN: The Minister in his opening remarks explained to the Committee that this year a large sum was provided for temporary assistance, and that this showed the permanent staff had been decreased and there might therefore be a necessity for employing additional temporary assistance. The Minister added that this was a good thing for the department. In looking through past Estimates he (Mr. Angwin) found that in 1904-5 the expenditure for the salaried staff was £56,200, and temporary assistance £996, making a total expenditure of £57,196. In 1905-6 the expenditure for the salaried staff was £49,135, and for temporary as-

sistance, £1,476, making a total of £50,611; or a decrease of £6,585.

The Minister for Works: The hon. member must also take into consideration the expenditure for the department on Loan Estimates.

Mr. ANGWIN: The Loan Estimates were not before us now, and he was merely dealing with salaries provided under the Consolidated Revenue Estimates. The Minister who was in control of the Works Department in 1904-5 reorganised that department, and several of the high officials were removed from their positions in the service, but unfortunately, owing to the conditions under which they held office, their salaries had to be paid for the following year; consequently the benefit of that Minister's action could not be felt until the financial year 1905-6. No doubt it was the action of the Minister controlling the department in 1904-5 that was responsible for the economies in working that department, and which resulted in a saving of over £6,000 in 1905-6. In 1906-7 the expenditure for the salaried staff was £53,278, and for the temporary staff, £6,144, making a total of £59,422 or an increase of £8,811 over the preceding year. On referring to the Estimates now under consideration it would be found that there was a proposed expenditure for 1907-8 on the salaried staff of £54,259, and for temporary assistance £8,000.

The Minister: The £8,000 was included in the £54,259.

Mr. ANGWIN: Admittedly, but even then an increase was shown on the year's transactions of £811. Last year the expenditure in the Works Department was £192,977, and the salaries paid to the staff amounted to about £49,000. In 1904-5 the expenditure was £337,927 or nearly double the amount spent in 1906-7, and yet we found that the amount paid for the carrying out of these works amounted only to £56,200.

The Minister: The hon. member should take the loan expenditure to arrive at the proper expenditure for the various years.

Mr. ANGWIN was considering the Estimates as they were given to the House. Instead of there being a decrease in the cost of administration, the Minister's own figures showed an increase. Special at-

tention should be drawn to a case, where a certain item, namely, the drainage of Bunbury, appeared under the Estimates for two Ministers, the Treasurer and the Minister for Works. There should certainly be an explanation as to the reason for this. The city of Perth had to pay for its drainage scheme and it would be interesting to know whether the town of Bunbury would also have to pay for its drainage. The Minister could very well have reduced his Estimates considerably this year, and it was especially essential seeing that the Government were crying out for more revenue. An investigation of the Works Estimates revealed the fact that almost every portion of the State had been considered in some way or other. If the Minister had taken a firm stand in the matter and had refused this year to make any special grants, there would have been no necessity to bring forward fresh taxation proposals. If such a course had been followed every portion of the State would have felt it was necessary for them to increase the local taxation, and if this course had been followed a good deal of the opposition which now existed on the question of increased taxation would have been removed. The Minister could have reduced his Estimates by £40,000 or £50,000, and, after the cost of collection, etcetera, had been paid, very little more than that sum could be realised as the result of the Government taxation proposal. He only wished the Minister to study economy as well as preach it.

Mr. E. C. BARNETT was pleased to see on the Estimates an amount of £5,000 for roads to act as feeders to the agricultural railways. Roads to open up new districts and give proper means of communication to new settlers was as necessary to the successful settlement of the land as railways were. He wished particularly to advocate the claims of pioneer settlers those who struck out and opened up new country where not one per cent. of the land which had been taken up was in communication with the railways except by bush roads. Notwithstanding the necessities that existed for reducing municipal and roads board subsidies special grants were necessary to assist the pioneers in new districts.

Mr. STONE regretted that there was a vote for municipalities and roads boards. These Estimates contained the same thing over and over again. Money was provided where it was least needed; the votes were divided amongst the largest centres, and the sooner we had assistance to roads boards and municipalities wiped out the better for all concerned. Let all districts depend on their own resources. He intended to object to certain items when they came before the Committee. The Government should devise some means for doing away with roads boards and municipal subsidies and cut up the country into shires, each district looking after its own requirements.

Mr. Scaddan: How was that to be done?

Mr. STONE: The country could be divided into shires, each district raising money to look after their own police, charities, schools and so forth. At the present time those close to the large centres got all the money. A great deal was said about assistance to pioneers and agriculturists, but they received very little.

Mr. H. BROWN moved—

That progress be reported and leave asked to sit again.

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

Ayes	5
Noes	23

Majority against .. 18

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. H. Brown	Mr. Bath
Mr. Holman	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Taylor	Mr. Collier
Mr. Underwood (Teller).	Mr. Cowcher
	Mr. Ewing
	Mr. Gregory
	Mr. Hayward
	Mr. Heitmann
	Mr. Johnson
	Mr. Keenan
	Mr. Layman
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Scaddan
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Troy
	Mr. Veyard
	Mr. Ware
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Gordon (Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. H. BROWN: To-night we had had the Works Estimates brought on at 11 o'clock, and evidently the intention of the Government was to force them through. He regretted it should go forth to the country that at 11 o'clock, with only 28 members present, the Government were only desirous of passing a quarter of a million of money.

Mr. Gordon: What was before the Committee?

Mr. H. BROWN wished to repeat that at 11 o'clock, with only 28 members present—

The CHAIRMAN: What was the point of order?

Mr. Gordon: What item was the member speaking to?

Mr. H. BROWN: It should not go forth to the country that at 11 o'clock at night, and with a special whip out for members to be here punctually at half-past four to-morrow—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must discuss the vote.

Mr. H. BROWN: It was disgraceful that it should go forth to the country—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must discuss the Works Estimates. He must not repeat himself.

Mr. H. BROWN: A sum of £215,000 was to be voted at 11 o'clock at night, when only 28 members were present. It was the same old Sunday school picnic, every member practically getting a prize. The more ardent the supporter of the Government, the greater the prize.

The CHAIRMAN: The member was out of order, and must withdraw what virtually amounted to a charge of corruption against the Government.

Mr. H. BROWN had only mentioned that—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw immediately.

Mr. H. BROWN would withdraw any words which the Chairman might mention were offensive.

The CHAIRMAN: The member must withdraw without qualification the charge of corruption.

Mr. H. BROWN: If the Chairman construed his remarks in that manner, he would withdraw them; but this was

essentially a Sunday-school picnic arrangement, by which every member was receiving a prize.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must refrain from repeating what already he had been requested to withdraw. If the hon. member again repeated the remark, he would be reported to the House.

Mr. H. BROWN regretted that the Chairman should have to take such a course. On these Estimates there was a sum of £2,196 for the district of Bunbury; Albany, represented by a most ardent supporter of the Government, was to receive £3,700; and Fremantle, so ably and well represented by the Minister for Works and other members, £5,258; Kalgoorlie, also represented by a member of the Ministry, had £4,810; Kataning, represented by a Government supporter, had £1,525; the adjoining district of Narrogin had £1,200; and Sussex, represented by the Treasurer, had £2,050. These were the chief items. He challenged Ministers to show a single item on these Estimates representing expenditure during the present financial year in Perth. We found also on these Estimates a sum voted for the construction of a footpath in a roads board district—a hitherto unheard of subsidy. Other boards found it hard enough to get money for roads, let alone footpaths. In the matter of sewerage the people of Perth had little for which to thank the present Government. Perth had never asked the Government to provide sewerage. The Works Department foisted the sewerage works on the people. Could the Minister for Works point to any sewerage scheme which his officials had undertaken in any other part of the world? Mr. Oldham had spent most of his time in excavating tanks on the goldfields, and Mr. Hickson was for a short time engaged as a cadet in measuring up the sewerage scheme of Sydney. But could the Minister prove that any one of his engineers had a practical knowledge of septic tank installation? Was it fair to expect Perth to be mulct in the interest on the cost of the Burswood Island septic tanks, erected two or three years before they would be used? Fancy a man in-

tending to start a business three years hence and constructing his premises now and not stocking them. In Parry Street a storm-water drain was laid for fifty or sixty chains, and no provision made for house connections. The road had been remade, and must soon be torn up again. The Minister referred to his memorable minute to the Premier as to a water scheme for a "greater Perth," and combated the idea that influence was brought to bear on members of the board. But the Government had nominated a civil servant as a member, and was it likely he would go contrary to their wishes? That minute was written so that the Canning scheme should be adopted. The board were not allowed to elect their own chairman. For the next few years it would pay the city of Perth to draw from the Mundaring reservoir the excess water required, and ascertain during the interval whether the goldfields would use a greater quantity than hitherto. A better scheme for Perth was highly necessary. A few days ago the Works Department prepared figures with reference to the existing bores, but the Minister had not mentioned that during the last fortnight the flow from some bores in the metropolitan area had diminished by some 800,000 gallons per day. The Minister treated the matter lightly, but the information came from a person connected with the board, and must be taken as correct. It was quite time that water supply and sewerage were taken out of the hands of the Government; and the ratepayers of the metropolitan area, who must defray the cost, should have some voice in the system to be adopted. But the present Minister had been more violently over-ridden by his officers than any other Minister for Works in recent times. Time after time Perth had applied to be allowed more representation in respect of both water and sewerage schemes; but the Works Department insisted on installing the scheme and charging the cost to the ratepayers, just as the department insisted, some few years ago, on constructing railway stations and charging fancy prices to the Railway Department, which eventually rebelled and refused to

pay. Would the Minister accept and pay for a house designed and erected by a contractor who did not consult the Minister as to the plans, and who, while the building was being erected, charged interest on the cost of construction? We were informed that these Estimates had been carefully examined by the department; but cases could be shown in which the local authority had asked for a small sum for a road, and the grant had been doubled and almost trebled in response to a request from an influential resident.

On motion by the *Minister for Works*, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.27 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 4th December, 1907.

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

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the *Colonial Secretary*: 1, Plans and papers in connection with Mr. Norman's report on the approaches to the Fremantle wharves, asked for by the Hon. J. W. Wright; 2, Papers in connection