

the Opposition side of the House and himself when he went on to the public platform and used entirely different language. He (Mr. Underwood) would not trouble about these matters if the Minister was inclined to refer to him as a political agitator. He could do so, but then he must not complain if he too was afterwards referred to as something else than a gentleman. He assured the Minister that it was these little assertions of his, that caused a great deal of heat and feeling in the House and out of it, and while that continued he would not be likely to have good feeling exhibited towards him and assistance given from the Opposition side. Of course the Opposition members were not afraid; they could reply just as often as the Minister could make these assertions. Another proposition put forward by the Minister was in regard to the treatment of stone by the public batteries, the stone that was particularly rich. He agreed with the proposition that the prospectors who treated particularly rich stone at the public batteries should pay a higher price for that than for lower grade or ordinary stone. He was aware of course it was more expensive to treat a few tons of rich stone, than it was to treat a fairly large quantity of ordinary grade stone. Again the Minister had said that he was going to the trouble of making special regulations in regard to concessions for rich stone from small leaders. If the leader were rich it was worth crushing, and no concession such as might be looked for would be of any avail to the owner of the stone. The Minister in his speech, referring to the appointment of the Superintendent of State Batteries, had spoken of the difficulty of removing a public servant if he were once appointed permanently. He (Mr. Underwood) agreed that such difficulty did exist. There was altogether too much difficulty about getting rid of some of the wasters in the civil service. It appeared to him that once a man got permanently into the civil service, he could not be shifted with a 10-ton crane. But the point was that the Minister recognised this position, and therefore it was his duty to attempt to remedy it. He trusted that the

Minister would do something with regard to the working of the mines in the Pilbara district; that he would see that those mines which had been held for a long time without working would now be either worked or forfeited to somebody else who would work them. He hoped that the Minister would also give consideration to the question of the Asiatics in the North.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 19th January, 1909.

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The Speaker took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: By-laws of the municipalities of Albany and Perth.

By the Treasurer: Perth Public Hospital, report of board of management.

QUESTION—ABORIGINES RELIEF.

Mr. UNDERWOOD asked the Premier: What number of aborigines received rations from the department each month of 1908?

The PREMIER replied: The total number of natives receiving Government relief at 112 relieving stations during the year ended 30th June, 1908, was 1,200. I will have a return prepared with reference to the other particulars.

QUESTION—STATE BATTERY, LENNONVILLE.

Mr. TROY asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has the material for the re-building of the Lennonville battery been forwarded to that locality? 2, If not, has the material been ordered? 3, What instructions has Mr. Carpenter received in regard to the re-erection of the battery? 4, When does the Minister anticipate the battery being available for crushing? 5, Is the Minister prepared to grant the Lennonville prospectors a rebate for carting their ore to the Boogardie battery pending the re-erection of the Lennonville battery.

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1. No. 2, A list of the necessary material has been obtained but it has not been forwarded pending a settlement with the insurance company. 3, Mr. Carpenter's instructions are to be in readiness to proceed with the work immediately a settlement is made. 4, Probably at the end of February. 5, I will endeavour to arrange for a small rebate pending repairs to this battery.

RAILWAYS, INDUSTRIAL CONDI- TIONS.

Statement by the Premier.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): Members are aware that during the last two days there has been a conference over a matter of interest to members of this Committee. I am glad to report that as a result of that conference—

Mr. Walker: Would it not be better to make a statement to the House—to move the Chairman out of the Chair?

Members: No, no! go on.

The PREMIER: At the risk of being slightly informal, I will say that this matter has been adjusted. And I think that while to some extent the demands of the men have been met, at the same time the interests of the State have been safeguarded. The points in dispute between the Commissioner and the employees resolved themselves into three, not hitherto adjusted. They were, in the first place, the question of a minimum wage; the request of the union being 7s. 6d. per day to porters, and 8s. per day to fet-

ters and labourers. Secondly, the question of 48 hours constituting a week's work, and thirdly, the matter of granting annual increments. The conference met yesterday, and met again this morning and this afternoon. Views were expressed on the one side by the Commissioner, representing the department; and on the other by the president, the secretary, the treasurer and another member of the executive, representing the union. It was agreed that the minimum rate of pay to any adult in the railway service should be 7s. 6d. per day, plus the privileges; a condition being that in regard to coaching porters they shall not be entitled to the payment of 7s. 6d. per day until such time as they have passed the necessary railway safe-working examinations. It was agreed to pay permanent way fitters and labourers who have no opportunity of promotion the wage of 8s. per day; the 8s. per day to be regarded as the standard wage subject to a probationary period not exceeding three months at 7s. 6d. per day. As to hours of duty, the union desired 48 hours per week, each week to stand alone. The Commissioner offered 96 hours per fortnight, each fortnight to stand alone. It was decided that 96 hours should constitute a fortnight's work, each fortnight to stand alone, and any time worked beyond 56 hours in the first week of the period to be paid for at overtime rates. That is to say, in case of a man working 56 hours in one week, the Commissioner would be entitled to adjust the work by making it 40 hours in the following week; anything beyond that being paid for at overtime. At the present time a man might work 30 hours in one week, and be required to work 66 hours in the next week. The new arrangement will prevent that. In other words, eight hours has been allowed in which to adjust the difference. It seemed to me to be to the satisfaction of the men concerned, and I am glad to say that there seems every probability that the little difference that existed is now a thing of the past. The representatives of the men assured me that these conditions will be satisfactory, and I am satisfied that they will be in the best interests of the country generally.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1908-9.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 15th January, Mr. *Daglish* in the Chair.

Department of Mines (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Vote—*Mines Generally*, £45,727:

Mr. HEITMANN: Having listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the Minister introducing these Estimates it struck him that the Minister, as was the case with the Ministry generally year in and year out, was in a very optimistic frame of mind, for which one, perhaps, could not blame him, in regard to this great industry upon which so much depended. It was generally recognised that we had in the mining industry that which would tide us over our years of difficulty until other industries were built up in the State to carry us along in the same way as we had progressed to the present; but while we were optimistic of the future of the mining industry, it was as well for us to study the industry closely to find in what way we could benefit it and make it of the best advantage to the people of the State. He was not so optimistic concerning the industry as the Minister and some members who had spoken on these Estimates. It was true that some parts of the Murchison—and he spoke first of all of the Murchison because he represented a portion of it—had a very bright future. Black Range would show great improvements in the next few years. It was certainly going to be a big field. Not only was it turning out a large quantity of gold, but there was what was greatly in favour of the district, a large area of auriferous country in the neighbourhood. Again, at Youanme, while there was no sensational return to date, the prospects of the district were indeed bright. There were big lodes there, and a huge area of country known to carry gold. Meekatharra had been mentioned so much in the Chamber that it was hardly necessary to say it had gone ahead by leaps and bounds, and that it also had a bright future. He was sorry to say in the Cue electorate nothing sensational had happened within the last two or three years. The biggest mine in the district,

the Great Fingal, was not looking as well as members would like to see, but there was every possibility of that mine opening up good values at lower depths. The next 12 months would prove whether the mine was valuable at a depth or not. In Cue proper the prospects had never been brighter than they were at present, and in this regard Cue presented an object lesson for those who studied mining and desired to do their best for the industry. We had in Cue an example of what could be done by the small men, an illustration of how much could be done by assisting small prospectors. There was in Cue a population of 700 or 800 people, but probably not more than 100 men were working for wages. It made one think that after all, while we desired to encourage big companies to come here and speculate their money, it might be much better for the country if the gold was found by small parties than by big companies. The great need in the industry was that every facility should be given to the small men to prospect, and that when a prospector discovered a bit of a show the Government should give him every assistance—that was, legitimate assistance. He was not going to beg for any particular locality, but he asked that all legitimate assistance should be given to those who had found shows. He was prepared to assist big companies as well as the small men, but it would be much better for the country if the gold were produced by small companies instead of in a wholesale manner by large companies who sent a great deal of the product out of the country. The Minister for Mines had stated he desired to do all he could for the small man. He would not say the Minister was not doing that, still a good deal more could be done to assist those who had shows to develop their properties. This year there was no vote under the Mines Development Act. At the same time, however, he believed the Government intended to spend money in that direction. If it were possible for the department to make the process of receiving assistance more simple and expeditious it would be to the great benefit of the struggling miner. In the Cue electorate it had some times taken six or seven

months for a party to get a few hundred pounds to assist them in working their show. If a system of decentralisation were entered upon, by means of which the wardens or registrars could deal with many of these applications, a great good would result and much time would be saved. At the present time the greatest power possessed by the warden could be overruled by the Minister. For instance, in regard to the question of exemption, if an application were made for a six months' exemption the warden could only recommend whether an exemption should be granted or not; it was for the Minister to say whether there should be an exemption and for what period. The Minister for Mines had frequently said he desired that greater responsibility should be given to the wardens. If he were sincere in that desire why was it that he should have done nothing but talk about it for the past two or three years? He had quite failed to give effect to that desire, and still reserved to himself the same powers he had held all along. This was acting detrimentally to the best interests of the fields. Many genuine cases, where people applied for exemption or for forfeiture, backed up by a recommendation from the warden, had been decided adversely upon by the Minister, and frequently on *ex parte* statements. A great deal had been said on the question of public batteries, but it was not his intention to refer to that question at any length. Had it not been for the public batteries the industry would not have advanced to anything like the extent it had. The department should provide the batteries, both those worked in the past and those to be erected in the future, with the most modern appliances. It should not be possible, as was now done, for people to point out that the State batteries were out of date. He had only one battery in his electorate, and, from all accounts, it would, perhaps, have been just as well if he had none. For some years the prospectors in Cue had asked for a battery. He was ready to admit that there were two sides to that question, and that the subject was one open to argument, but the Minister had not given that consideration to it which it deserved. The Minister had not kept the word he

gave to the deputation which waited on him in Cue with regard to the question. In cases of this kind where applications were made by prospectors it was apparent that political influence had a considerable effect in swaying the decision of the Minister. In the case in question great influence had been brought to bear on the Minister and the department by the vested interests in Cue. True, there were sufficient crushing facilities provided by the batteries at Cue to crush twice the amount of stone taken out from the district during the past two or three years, but the prospectors were dissatisfied, and those having a knowledge of the facilities were aware that something was wrong with the batteries. Investigation should be made departmentally into the matter. When at Cue the Minister had not shown the deputation which waited upon him that courtesy which was due to them. He was closeted with the vested interests right up to the time the deputation waited on him, and, while the deputation was going on, the owners of the private batteries in the district were in the room, and the deputation was, in consequence, not given a fair chance. The Minister promised to make inquiries to see if it was not possible to bring about a different scale of charges for crushing, but up to the present the prospectors of Cue had heard nothing from him in that direction. It was to be hoped the matter would be taken in hand at once, and that the Minister would try and do something for the men who were really deserving of assistance from the Government. Cue had asked for very little from the Government, but all their requests had been genuine. The people there now needed better crushing facilities, lower charges, and assistance in the nature of the establishment of a public battery. Last June the Minister travelled through the Cue electorate, and at Boorambie an application was made for the erection of a windmill for the well there, and, in reply, he promised that he would give the matter consideration, and that they should bring it forward again in two months time. What did the Minister mean? Did he mean that by that time the mine, which was not then looking too well, would probably show better prospects, or was it

that the request would be granted if some other member were returned for the electorate at the general elections? Surely the Minister should be convinced by now that it was not possible for anyone but a labour man to hold the Cue seat. The labour electorates, as well as those represented by members on his side of the House, should receive due and equal consideration. He had no desire to say nasty things about any man; if he had he could refer to some of the uncalled-for remarks of the Minister about himself, but he would let that go and when the proper time came he would deal with it. The remarks made by the Minister were neither manly nor fair. With regard to the inspection of mines question, he did not desire to bring up the old question which he had mentioned to the House times without number, but he must say that the Minister did not give due consideration to the administration of that portion of his department. The member for Greenough the other evening, said that much more money was spent in Western Australia in inspection than in any other State, but we found from the figures that there was less money spent in proportion to the full amount expended by the Mines Department in Western Australia than any other portion of the Commonwealth. Western Australia spent two per cent. of the total departmental expenditure in inspection, while, in some of the other States the percentage was as high as 12. We must recognise that, owing to the vast distances to be travelled, and the scattered nature of the gold-mining districts, the cost should be larger than anywhere else in Australia. There were not sufficient inspectors. It was almost impossible for one man to do the work expected of him, especially in very large areas such as the Murchison. The inspector had to travel over 700 or 800 miles, and it was impossible for him to do his work effectively. If there were two inspectors there it was doubtful whether the work would be carried out satisfactorily. The only remedy was for the Minister to give effect to the expression of opinion of Parliament in the Mines Regulation Act, embodied in the section dealing with check inspectors. If check inspectors were ap-

pointed a much better system would result and give more satisfaction to the miners of the State generally. This was a matter of grave importance to Western Australia. The number of deaths last year in comparison with the previous year increased greatly, and on the Murchison the death rate per annum was 70 out of every 10,000 miners. This was an extraordinary state of affairs, and the Minister should take steps to have some effective inspection of the mines. Although there was a clause providing for check inspectors, it had been found on the Murchison—and he supposed the same thing applied to other districts—that it was impossible to get men appointed who could do that work. The Minister said, through the State Mining Engineer, that the union secretaries could not be allowed to act as check inspectors, and that the term "working miner" meant a man working in the mines at the time of his appointment. This was a quibble on the part either of the Minister or the State Mining Engineer, for the case upon which he based his argument was a very trivial one, coming under the Coal Mines Act of England. If the Minister thought this was the case then he should amend the Act so that independent check inspectors could be appointed. It was useless to say that a man working in a mine could inspect that mine. So soon as he sent in the first adverse report he would be discharged, and he would have no remedy. This had been done time after time, and it must be apparent to the Minister that it was impossible for a man to work in a mine and undertake the duties of check inspector. Men representing miners should be appointed to the positions of check inspectors whether they were representatives of the unions or not. There were other matters upon which he intended to say a few words, but as there would be an opportunity of speaking on each item it was his intention to reserve further remarks until they were reached.

Mr. GOURLEY: Having listened to the speech of the Minister for Mines with regard to the mining industry, he had come to the conclusion that there was nothing in it to lead members to hope:

for any great advantage in the near future so far as the opening up of the goldfields was concerned. However, with regard to the position of Western Australia from the gold producing point of view, he supposed it was more than equal to that of any other part of the Commonwealth. Like a great many others he came to the State many years ago and took up employment on the mines. It was his intention at that time, as he supposed it was the intention of others also, to remain a few years, and after having made a few pounds, to return to the other States. He had been here now a great number of years, and he could speak highly of Western Australia from a gold mining and also a prospecting point of view. There was no other part of the Commonwealth which presented such favourable opportunities. It was not, however, his intention to deal with the mining industry, but he wished to say a few words with regard to the State battery system. So far as the Menzies State battery was concerned, a battery with which he was particularly well acquainted, he desired to object to the methods that had been adopted there, and which were also adopted at various other batteries throughout the State. Some time ago a manager was appointed, and his methods of taking samples at that mill were very objectionable. He referred to the time when Mr. Twyford was manager of the State mill. All samples were taken in the presence of the party who was crushing, and after they were dried they were screened through a screen which was finer than that usually used at a battery. The consequence was that the assay taken was not a correct assay, for the simple reason that the rough sands were thrown away. He mentioned this matter for the reason that if the same system prevailed at other State batteries he hoped that the Minister would remedy the defect, and adopt a system of taking samples and assaying sands in the manner that prevailed at the Menzies battery at the present time. As far as the Menzies battery as it existed to-day was concerned, the Minister adopted a wise procedure when he appointed Mr. Williamson to the posi-

tion of manager. This gentleman had since his appointment given every satisfaction. To revert to the mode of sampling that went on there previously. He (Mr. Gourley) had crushed at the Menzies State battery for a number of years, and patronised it more than any other prospector, regarding the battery as one which was deserving of every patronage. He found that since Mr. Williamson had taken charge, the assay value of the tailings had gone up very considerably, due entirely to the fact that the manager had adopted a wise procedure. He did away with the screens that were used, and the sands assayed by him were now taken direct from the battery, and the prospector received the whole contents of his tailings. That was the condition of affairs existing at the present time at Menzies, and he hoped that the same conditions would be insisted upon by the Minister for Mines in all the other districts. In 1904, the Minister for Mines issued instructions to the various State battery managers to the effect that a separate assay of all prospectors' sands and a separate assay of prospectors' slimes should be taken. In asking a question in the House a few evenings ago, he found that these instructions had been carried out, as far as the batteries were concerned, with the exception of those at Menzies and Lennonville. It was a scandalous state of affairs when they found that managers could flout the wishes of the Minister for Mines with regard to such a matter, and the complaints which had come from Menzies were very numerous. With regard to the action of the manager in not making separate assays, a deputation was appointed in Menzies to wait on the Minister. He (Mr. Gourley) remembered the occasion well, because the Minister asked a question of the manager as to whether the separate assays had been taken, and the manager replied that they had been taken. In reply to the question that he (Mr. Gourley) asked in the House recently, it was said that separate assays had not been taken. A general assay was taken from the slimes dump, which meant that the prospectors who had been crushing there for years would only be paid from the assay

taken from the general dump. That dump assayed about 6dwts. A large number of crushings had been put through, and where the prospectors had separate assays taken of the slimes, they had gone as high as 15 and 16dwts. It was an injustice to the prospectors to find that the instructions of the Minister were flouted, and it seemed to him that there was practically no remedy for this at the present time. When a slimes plant was erected at these centres it meant that the prospectors would be paid according to the assay taken from the dump, which would be about 6dwts. Where instructions had been issued to managers and they had practically disobeyed them, the managers should be dismissed from the service. With regard to the present manager of the Menzies State battery it was the desire of that official to give every consideration and assistance to the prospectors, and not only that, he was considerate of the wishes and the best interests of all. Since Mr. Williamson had taken charge of the State battery at Menzies, a period now of about twelve months, between 10,000 and 11,000 tons of stone had been crushed there. During the previous year the management crushed there something like 400 or 500 tons. The Minister might say that that was due to the fact that the Shenton mill was crushing, but he (Mr. Gourley) was of opinion that the fact that the Menzies State battery was working only half-time in that period was entirely due to bad management. It was the duty of every manager who had charge of a mill to show every consideration to prospectors, and he assured the Minister that if battery managers adopted that attitude, the prospectors would be quite prepared to assist and in turn show every consideration to the department. The very fact that the batteries and the department had lost thousands of pounds was due to the lax administration of past years. Even at the present time, as far as Leonora was concerned, there were complaints there which were equally as strong as they were when the same gentleman was in charge of the State mill at Menzies. He hoped that the Minister

would inquire into the charges that were made.

The Minister for Mines: When they are made.

Mr. GOURLEY: It was his intention to see that the charges which had been made to him were made to the Minister as well. He was speaking now in the interests of the department, because it was in the interests of the department and of the country that battery managers should show every consideration to the prospectors. With regard to the battery charges, he was in hopes that the Minister would not adopt the sliding scale. When the sliding scale was adopted in the past the maximum charge was 14s. per ton, and private batteries which were crushing in the district were receiving a good deal of patronage. Since the reduction of the charge to 10s. the other batteries had not been able to pay. Should the Minister decide to revert to the sliding scale, and increase the charges to 12s. or 13s. per ton, it would mean that some of the other batteries would again start crushing, and the State mills would lose patronage. If the Minister resolved to revert to the sliding scale the maximum charge should not be more than 10s. The proposal of the Minister to reduce the charges for low-grade ore would be in the best interests of the mining industry. He would quote from the Minister's own paper an article on the subject of State batteries, and he surmised that it was inspired by the Minister. The article said—

"Throughout last year the State batteries crushed prospectors' and leaseholders' stone at a fixed rate of 10s. per ton, except in the case of stone treated on time, when the price worked out at about 7s. per ton. The previous year the sliding scale was in operation, and in some quarters it is desired that a reversion to that system shall take place. We doubt very much the wisdom of such a step, and opine that the great majority of prospectors prefer the present fixed rate to that of the sliding scale, which looks better on paper than it works out in practice. During last year few local complaints

have been forthcoming in regard to the present system of charges. The introduction of the sliding scale was designed to encourage the development of low-grade propositions, which could be profitably worked at 8s. per ton crushing charges, but would not pay at a fixed rate of, say, 12s. per ton. It was urged that the low-grade ore should be shown the greatest consideration, as the rich stone could afford to pay higher crushing rates. The idea was a perfectly feasible one, on the surface, but it has to be taken into consideration that many low-grade shows are more remunerative propositions than others whose crushings average 3oz. per ton. For instance, there are in close proximity to the Menzies State mill low-grade shows in oxidised country, which are crushed on the time system for about 6s. per ton, and parcels of stone can be broken out in quick time. On the other hand there are shows a few miles distant where the owners are operating on stone a few inches in width in very hard country, in which very little progress can be made. After a few months' hard work the parcel, which consists of a few tons, is treated, and gives a return of 3oz. or 4oz. per ton. Notwithstanding that the gold may only be worth between £2 and £3 per oz., the prospector is called upon, under the sliding scale, to pay the maximum treatment charge, although the crushing has been less remunerative to him than that of the owner of the low-grade proposition, whose gold may be of excellent value. Owners of low-grade propositions find it more profitable—when the stone is not too hard—to crush on time than to pay the minimum charge of 8s. proposed to be charged under the sliding scale, and where they have a large body of stone they in some instances will erect a crushing plant on the spot. The present general charge of 10s. per ton is one that has worked satisfactorily during the year, and is one that prospectors have little to cavil at. There is, however, room for a reduction in the present charge for cyaniding, and

it is hoped that the department will see its way clear to bring it about in the near future."

Mr. Holman: What paper is that?

Mr. GOURLEY: The Minister's own paper.

The Minister for Mines: You know I have nothing to do with it beyond being a shareholder.

Mr. GOURLEY: It was because he was under the impression that probably the article had been inspired by the Minister for Mines that he had quoted it.

The Minister for Mines: I have never seen it before.

Mr. GOURLEY: Here was a letter from a prospector in that district on the subject of battery charges and which had been published in the same paper—

"Sir.—Re the above, permit me to point out that the charges and treatment meted out to the prospectors by the manager and his staff at the Menzies State battery have given satisfaction all round, and it is not, I feel perfectly sure in saying, the wish of the prospectors that there should be any change, unless it be for the improvement of the present system, in the interests of the prospectors. A lesser charge for the treatment of tailings would certainly be approved of, and which in the opinion of many of the prospectors the Government could reduce without any great loss. The opinions voiced in your last leading article that the majority of prospectors favour the present system of charges to that of the sliding scale can be readily endorsed, for should there be any change from the system adopted for the past year, dissatisfaction will surely arise. On reviewing the work done by the battery under the present conditions of charges, etc., for the past year, it will be seen that since the present manager and his staff took over the control of the mill, and the amount of stone crushed and the returns therefrom, and the fact that the battery has been kept continually going with three shifts without a hitch or a complaint, it goes to show that general satisfaction has

been given to those most concerned, and it is to be hoped that the present condition of affairs will continue to remain in force."

In respect to the sliding scale, if it were the intention of the Minister to adopt this system the maximum charge ought not to be greater than 10s. per ton. Because if it exceeded that amount it would mean that where private mills were in existence they would come into serious competition with the Government batteries. This could be borne out on the experience of the past. He thought it would be in the best interests of the State if £50,000 or £100,000 were to be set aside for the assistance of prospectors throughout the whole of the goldfields. The gold yield was steadily decreasing and the out-back centres were not looking as well as they had done in previous years. In view of this it had become the duty of the Government to step in and assist the prospectors wherever possible. He was well aware that even to-day the Minister was subsidising syndicates. But the syndicates that were being assisted by the Government were not doing as good work for the country as did the legitimate prospector. They had had an instance recently in Menzies, where a syndicate subsidised by the Minister had gone out and absolutely squandered the money. Working first at seven or eight miles from the town and subsequently coming in closer to Menzies they had selected patches of ground upon which nobody knowing anything at all about mining would have spent a penny, with the result that the money advanced by the Government, like that subscribed by the public, was entirely lost, and no good purpose was accomplished. On the other hand if a small party of legitimate prospectors required assistance they found it impossible to get it, although they were told that if desirous of erecting machinery they could obtain help in that direction. But the prospector working down to 100 feet or less required very little machinery indeed. If the Government would but expend a sum of money in giving assistance to the prospector in practical ways, great good would be accomplished. In

this regard he was strongly in favour of the appointment of mining boards, which could take into consideration any request for assistance and make their recommendations to the Minister. In regard to the erection of public batteries he could congratulate the Minister upon the good work accomplished. He knew that great benefit had been derived from the erection of these mills; in fact it would be hard to imagine the position in which many of the goldfields would be to-day had it not been for these public batteries. Therefore he could only say, and he knew that all practical mining men would agree with him, that in the best interests of the State the battery system should be widely extended. There were many districts throughout the country where three-head mills could be erected with profit both to the State and to the prospectors. Such a place was Mount Sir Samuel, which with other places lay at some distance from the railway. If the prospectors in those districts took their stone to private mills they had to pay from 18s. to 20s. per ton for crushing, in addition to the very high cost of carting. During his recent tour through the East Murchison goldfields he had found in nearly every centre a large number of foreigners working on the mines. At the same time he had been astonished to note the number of our own people who were on the track looking for work. Yet he had not found one foreigner carrying his swag. All of these were practically working on the mines.

The Minister for Mines: Do you wish to infer that the inspection is bad?

Mr. GOURLEY: Certainly a good deal of blame was attachable to the inspectors. This condition of affairs should not be permitted to exist in Western Australia. Back in 1904 the Minister for Mines had made a statement to the effect that in his opinion foreigners should not be allowed to work in our mines.

The Minister for Mines: No; what I said was that no man should be employed underground unless he could intelligently speak English.

Mr. GOURLEY: It had been generally understood that what the Minister had

said was that the foreigner should not be allowed to work in the mines at all.

The Minister for Mines: No, I did not say that.

Mr. GOURLEY: At any rate he (Mr. Gourley) was of opinion that they should not be allowed to work in the mines. He himself had had some experience of the ill effects of having the mines overrun with foreigners. When working in the Shenton mine in the early days he had been set to a task with five foreigners, some of whom could not speak English at all. He remembered a hole being fired by a Britisher, who had previously instructed one of the foreigners to go through the level and prevent anybody entering it. Not clearly understanding his instructions the foreigner had simply gone away but had not attempted to prevent anybody coming in. The result had been that two men entered the level, and were almost upon these holes when the shots went off. From his own personal experience he could give several other illustrations of the same character. There could never be any satisfactory condition of affairs while these foreigners were employed as freely as they were to-day. Without hesitation he could say it was due largely to the fact that the mining inspectors did not carry out their duties; because a large proportion of these foreigners could not speak English at all. If the Minister for Mines would but make inquiries as to the number of foreigners working in our mines at the present time he would probably be astonished at the result. He (Mr. Gourley) desired to congratulate the Minister for Mines upon the very hopeful speech he had made in the House the other evening. He was sure there was no other part of the Commonwealth which offered such inducement to prospectors and capitalists alike as did Western Australia to-day.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: As the only coal mining representative in the House he desired to say a few words upon this particular phase of the great mining industry. It was a matter for congratulation both of the Minister for Mines and of the public generally that such splendid strides should have been made by the coal mining industry during last year, when the out-

put increased by 33,000 tons. It was only fair that he should say that the Scottish Collieries had been one of the pioneers in the bunkering trade. That company had been the means largely of creating an export trade for Collie coal, and had given a good deal of help to the industry generally. With respect to the question of a new area, he desired to point out that there was a promising area just outside Collie, which in his opinion it was the duty of the Government to take up and work as a State mine. Coal had been found there better than anything now being operated upon; and the Government to look after their interests should reserve a portion of that area and establish a State coal mine. It would do away with a good deal of what was now going on, the cutting up of the present small slices of trade into smaller ones. The member for Greenough had spoken of the cost of the inspection of mines in Western Australia as against that in the Eastern States; but the conditions of New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia were entirely different. In New South Wales practically the whole of the mines were in three districts—Broken Hill, Newcastle, and the Southern district, and the inspectors could go through most of the mines in any one month. It was similar in Victoria, but here in Western Australia the inspectors had to travel hundreds of miles. The member for Greenough took exception to the high rate of inspection fees—7s. 3d. in Western Australia against 2s. 6d. in New South Wales and 2s. 9d. in Victoria; but the hon. member took no exception to the exceedingly high rate of accidents in the coal mines of this State. Our coal mines should be the safest coal mines in the world, and they were if worked properly. But we had some startling figures from the official *Year Book*. For each person employed in New South Wales 106,000 tons of coal were raised; in Victoria 32,000 tons, Queensland 24,000 tons, and Western Australia 5,000 tons. The percentage of injured to the thousand men employed was: New South Wales 4.7; Victoria 6.9; Queensland 18.6; Tasmania 4.8, and Western Australia 100.4.

Figures like these demanded a lot of explanation ; and while one spoke of the tacking on to the inspectors of mines the duties of inspecting machinery, some thing at least should be done to put on more inspectors who would endeavour to reduce the number of men injured. He took strong exception to the many interpretations put on the Coal Mines Act. The Act was looked upon as one of the best in the world, but the Minister, or rather his advisers, the Attorney General's Department, were to be blamed for the interpretation they put on it. He (Mr. Wilson) had extensive knowledge of the inspection of mines, having been a check-inspector for the last 20 years, and understanding the use of the anemometer and everything in connection with mining ventilation; and the Collie miners' union five years ago had appointed him check-inspector. He had carried out the duties attached to this position until 16 months ago when some of the mines' officials had looked up some old verdict given in England and blocked him from going down the mines.

The Minister for Mines : It was not an old verdict.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: It was a decision given by a magistrate and never appealed against. In passing, one could say that in New South Wales there were men appointed by the miners as a whole, whose sole duty it was to attend to inspections, and the companies and Government believed in that system because it gave better results.

Mr. Bath : That decision had no bearing whatever on the present case.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: Blame was rather attachable to the people in the old country for not having appealed against the decision. The Mines Department should create a case and have it tested before the Federal High Court. The section of the Act, which was framed to help the miner, provided that the persons employed in the mine could appoint two of their number, or any two persons not being mining engineers, who were practical working miners, to inspect the mine. Sixteen months ago, having gone to the mines as usual to do his inspections so that the men could get a certain amount

of ventilation, he was told by the Proprietary mine officials that he could not go down because he was not a practical working miner. The fact that he was not working at the time blocked him from going down. That was the tissue-paper seat that the mine officials sat on. He was blocked at two mines on this account, and from that date no general inspection had been made in two of the coal mines in the district.

The Treasurer : You have plenty of working miners there; why did you not get them to do it?

Mr. A. A. WILSON: There were plenty of working miners; but it was not every working miner that could check air, or read or use the anemometer. Yesterday the Scottish Colliery mine was laid idle for half a day by half the men employed. The men were practically compelled to leave the mine because they were being nearly suffocated through ill-ventilation. That was the result of stopping check-inspectors from going there. The Minister would surely cause investigation to be made into this and see that the word "working" was taken out of the Act, because the Act as it stood now was useless to the miners.

Mr. Heilmann : He will not shift it.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: One was encouraged to believe that the word would be shifted. The Act provided that no incompetent man could work alone on a working face; but the Mines Department, through the advice of the Attorney General's Office, said that while one man without experience could not work alone on a working face, fifty men could do so. Certain questions were asked of the inspector of mines at Collie with reference to this. The inspector was asked could one inexperienced person work alone as a coal-getter under the Act. The inspector replied "No." The inspector was then asked, could ten or fifty inexperienced persons over 14 years of age work together at the face of the workings under the Act? The inspector replied that two or more inexperienced persons can work together at the face as coal-getters and one could work alone provided he was not employed as a coal-getter. That was not the intention of the Act. About three

weeks ago he had occasion to bring under the notice of the inspector of mines the question of boys 14 and 15 years of age working more than eight hours a day, and the inspector had caught boys working below for 16 hours on one day. Yet the department said that no action could be taken. Surely it was never intended that the Act should work that way? The time had arrived when the Act should be amended from beginning to end, the evolution in coal mining owing to the introduction of coal-cutting machines making this imperative.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS**: The member for Pilbara had drawn attention to certain ore which the Minister for Mines had promised to have carried by camels belonging to the Public Works Department and used in the construction of the rabbit-proof fence, to a port for a gentleman named Snell. These were the facts of the case: on the 2nd May, 1907, he had received the following telegram from the Minister for Mines:—

“Reported copper discovery on Oakover River. Am desirous of giving facilities to convey 50 tons as trial sample of copper lode. Will you instruct officer in charge rabbit-proof fence to convey 50 tons to Condon provided ore is bagged and delivered at nearest depôt to reported discovery.”

To this he replied—

“Yes. Shall debit your department with cost. You make arrangements with owners of ore.”

Therefore if there was any default in connection with the conveyance of the ore to the port it rested on his shoulders. But he could clearly show that the promises given were absolutely and entirely carried out. Mr. Anketell was at the time on his way back from the rabbit-proof fence, and on arriving at Perth a day or so later, he (the Minister for Works) telegraphed to the Minister for Mines—

“Anketell returned and reports can arrange take ore in June provided it is delivered nearest depôt.”

Mr. Taylor : How far was the mine from the depôt?

The Minister for Mines: About 18 or 20 miles.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS**: The discovery was not far away from the fence. The work was drawing near conclusion and the transport plant was to be disposed of and some few months after that date was nearly all sold. But the ore never came to hand. It was not delivered at the depôt as arranged. Instructions had been sent to Inspector Johnson who was on the fence to despatch it to Condon if it were delivered at the depôt. On the 19th November the Minister for Mines wrote—

“You will remember that I made arrangements with you that the rabbit-proof fence party at Condon should convey under certain conditions 50 tons of copper ore for W. A. Snell to Port Hedland. Arrangements were all completed, and I advised Snell that subject to his bagging this ore and conveying it to a spot to be arranged with the engineer in charge of the fence, your officers would convey the ore to Condon. I would like to know if you have any correspondence in connection with this matter, or if any reason is assigned why your officers have not carried out the instructions which I presume were issued by you. The matter is one of urgency, and I desire to wire to Snell at once.”

To that minute he had replied as follows on the 21st November:—

“On the 7th May, 1907, I wired to Nullagine as follows:—‘Anketell returned and reports can arrange take ore in June, provided it is delivered nearest depôt.’ Upon receipt of your minute and telephonic information as to the telegram from Mr. Snell we wired the superintendent rabbit-proof fence at Condon as follows:—‘Re carting copper ore Oakover River, when was this ore delivered at one of our depôts? Reply urgent.’ Last night we received the following reply from Mr. Johnson:—‘No ore was delivered at depôts.’ You will see that our undertaking was to cart ore provided it was delivered during June. We have only 11 camels available for transport and a sale of all stock is arranged at Condon on the 23rd inst. Apparently from the information to hand it is quite

owing to the delay in bringing the ore into our dépôts that it was not carted." That conclusively proved that we made all arrangements to cart the ore, but it was not done owing to the default of Mr. Snell who did not have the ore there at the time arranged. The statement of the case was made in a most damaging manner by the member for Pilbara as an example of the promises which were made by the Minister for Mines and the way in which they went unfulfilled. Had the hon. member made one or two investigations beforehand he would have been convinced that every effort was made by the departments concerned to carry out the promises faithfully. In connection with mining matters, there were a great many members on this side of the House not so conversant with mining affairs as many members opposite, and when we heard these exaggerated statements it made us sometimes somewhat sceptical about other information which might possibly be accurate. In this particular case it had been stated as an absolute fact that the Government had made default, but the papers clearly and conclusively proved that the default was solely with Mr. Snell.

Mr. Bath: Anyhow, the ore was not taken down. If a person concerned communicates with a member surely the latter is justified in speaking in accordance with the communication.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: One of the conditions was that the ore should be bagged and conveyed to one of our dépôts.

Mr. Taylor: By when?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The arrangement was made in May, and by the following November the ore had not been bagged and taken to a dépôt, for Mr. Johnson's telegram in November said that no ore had been sent to the dépôt up to then. In the meantime the construction of the fence was concluded and we were selling the transport. How, therefore, could we convey the ore? Mr. Snell had the opportunity and it was entirely his own fault that the ore was not carted.

Mr. McDOWALL: It had given him very great satisfaction to find the Minister for Mines so optimistic in connection with the mining outlook. All admitted that the

industry was of primary importance to the State, and in the circumstances, should receive every possible encouragement from the Minister. His district was particularly of a low-grade character, and being so the great difficulty was to work it profitably at the present price of water. He was well aware of the fact that the Minister for Mines was not connected with the Water Supply Department, but surely there should be some connection between those two being departments. The mine which at present was practically the salvation of Coolgardie was Tindals; it was a low-grade proposition. He had been informed that only within the last few days it had been determined to increase the price of water, or at all events to charge 5s. 3d. per thousand gallons. The management of the mine maintained that it was impossible to pay that price, and there was a possibility of an application being made for exemption, or, as an alternative, that the mine should obtain water from other sources. It was known that a private company had a dam, or at all events a water supply, within close proximity to this particular mine. The Coolgardie Water Supply was indisputably a national work; it should be national in character and should be worked in connection with the Mines Development Vote. It would not be altogether fair for the Water Supply Department to say to the Minister for Mines that they would supply water at a reasonable cost if the Minister paid for it from the Mines Development Vote, thereby throwing all responsibility on the Minister for Mines. There should, however, be some reciprocity and some means of providing cheap water for the low-grade shows in Coolgardie. There was another mine which even now could be let on tribute if it were not for the water difficulty. It was a two or three dwts. show and it was absolutely impossible with the present price of water for it to be worked now. A party of tributers were prepared to take it up if they could get water at a reasonable rate. The mining industry should be encouraged in every possible way, and some effort should be made whereby water could be obtained at a reasonable rate in order that

it could be developed. Some would say the Coolgardie Water Supply should be made a payable concern. Notwithstanding that a deficiency in actual revenue might be shown on the operations of the department, still indirectly it was a paying concern returning thousands of pounds into the coffers of the State and indirectly was making the railways pay; therefore the scheme should be looked upon as one national in character. We did not ask that every agricultural railway should be made actually self-supporting, for all realised that some lines could not possibly pay from their inception, consequently, therefore, other lines that could be made to pay, and particularly the goldfields ones, were called upon to supply the deficiency in the case of non-paying lines. Under some such system it was surely possible for something to be done in connection with the water supply for mines in low-grade localities. There might be an immediate loss on the transaction, but undoubtedly this would be compensated for by an increased gold output. Many other districts were in the same position in this regard as Coolgardie, and it was to be hoped the Minister for Works would be able to take this matter into consideration and arrive at some scheme which would result in the low-grade shows being put into active operation. In Coolgardie there was a great undeveloped low-grade tract of country and there was practically no limit to the wealth of the district in that respect; but that country could not be developed so long as the price of water was so high. A trouble which was causing a considerable amount of annoyance in his district was that the prospectors did not get paid for their slimes. Another question was that too much was charged for the treatment of sands. The Minister realised the importance of the prospector to the State, and it was to be hoped, therefore, that these matters would receive due consideration. Prospectors were worth almost untold wealth to us, and everything that tended to disheartening them kept them back and rendered it impossible for them to prospect new shows, was to the detriment of the State generally. Every possible facility should be given in connection with

battery charges, fair treatment should be given in connection with the sands and slimes, and, in fact, prospectors should be met in every possible way. He did not desire to be unreasonable, for he was quite sure the Minister for Mines, as the head of a large State department, must have considerable trouble in trying to arrive at correct conclusions in connection with many departmental matters, but it was to be hoped that matters of this kind, which were really national in character and were parochial in no sense of the term, would receive the consideration to which they were entitled.

Mr. ANGWIN: In connection with the discussion which had taken place, members who had spoken had told the Committee that they had some interest in the Mines vote. He represented a portion of Fremantle, and there was something in this vote which affected his district, consequently he was given an opportunity of saying a few words. He was pleased to hear the member for Pilbara draw attention to the fact that gold was not the only mineral to be mined in the State. In addition, the hon. member pointed out we had tin, copper, and coal, and various other minerals, all of which, however, did not get the same attention as the gold industry. He had hoped that something would have been done before this which would have tended to assist the mining of base metals. When the Supply Bill was before members in August last he asked the Minister for Mines when it was intended to do something to assist mining in the North-West in the way of providing smelting facilities. It had been pointed out to him repeatedly during the past few months that we had untold wealth in the North-West portion of the State, and that if proper facilities were provided for those engaged in the industry, or were willing to embark in it, not only they, but the State generally would derive considerable benefit. The Minister, when speaking on the Estimates, said that as far as copper was concerned little of it was being mined. We knew well that with the exception of those at Ravensthorpe there were no Government smelters erected. The Minister, in August last, stated that before

he took into consideration the question of providing smelting facilities for the North-West the report of the officer who had been sent to the North-West would be awaited. This officer was deputed to make inquiries into the North-West trade with the view of providing proper shipping facilities to enable the mine owners to bring their metals to a place where they could be treated. The Minister told the House that the Government wanted to see the report of this officer first, and then determine which would be the best scheme to evolve. It was well known from answers that had been given to various questions that this report had come to hand some months since, but the Government had not revealed to members the nature of it, consequently members were not in a position to know what the contents were. Sufficient time had elapsed to enable the Minister to look into the report, and to ascertain whether the shipping facilities on the North-West coast were sufficient to enable him to at once establish smelters. He hoped the Minister would give the Committee some information with regard to this matter. We knew that a large number of people, particularly in the Fremantle district, had been wondering what action the Government would take with regard to the smelters, and all hoped that the Minister would immediately take this matter into consideration and come to some decision. He hoped the Minister would not be led astray in dealing with the mining industry by the words which had been spoken by the member for Greenough. Members were aware that the country was going through a period of financial stringency, but unless something was done with the view to removing that stringency it would be impossible to overcome the difficulties in which we found ourselves. In the Mines Department report for 1907 it was shown that the mining industry had been assisted by way of loans to the extent of £13,943. That was a mere flea bite, and he thought that the Government, by giving such a small sum showed that they were losing faith in an industry which had built up the State. The time had arrived when the Government should show to the world that this country had so far only been

scratched, and that we had the greatest gold and other metal producing areas in the world. Another matter he wished to refer to was that the Minister or his officers showed they held wrong views when dealing with the Mines Development Vote. Application had frequently been made for the erection of State batteries in various districts, and only that day he had read in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* a reply to a letter which was sent to the member for Kanowna, wherein it was pointed out that in that district an application was made by petition for the erection of a State battery, and that the Government did not erect batteries for the express purpose of attracting development, but only when they could be assured that the battery would prove payable. Consequently the miners who went into a particular district and spent every penny they had in prospecting would not receive any assistance in the shape of a State battery until they could insure the Government against loss. That was not the way to open up our mining areas. The Government should be like private individuals; they ought to realise the possibility of loss at times, and they should also realise the indirect gain that would follow on the expenditure of a sum of money such as would be involved in the erection of a State battery in a district.

The Minister for Mines: Are you speaking of Ballagundi?

Mr. ANGWIN: That was the district to which he was referring. It appeared to him from travelling through various parts of the State, more particularly in the Murchison, that we had there a number of gold-producing mines which so far had not been properly developed, and it was realised that if the Government would render the assistance that was required, that if they would only show their faith in the country, great things might take place at an early date. Only a few weeks ago he had the pleasure of visiting the electorate of the Minister for Mines, and he went to a little place called Comet Vale. He noticed even there that developments were taking place, and that the men of that field were spending their all in opening up the country. It was felt even there that if the Government would

render these men the assistance that they deserved, even little Comet Vale would become an important district. Unfortunately, a good deal of the assistance that was given to mining was generally given to large companies. The same assistance was not extended to those people who were prospecting and who risked their lives. It was given, as far as he could gather, to those large companies, who were paying big dividends and who could afford to protect themselves.

The Minister for Mines: You might mention one or two of those companies.

Mr. ANGWIN : The Great Boulder Company, to whom water was supplied. The member for Coolgardie, in speaking on this question, referred to the price that was charged for water, and he said it was a matter of impossibility for some of the low-grade mines in that district to exist unless the water was reduced very considerably in price. He realised the difficulty that the Minister had to contend with, and he also realised the fact that the water scheme was a great national institution, but, at the same time, it was by rendering assistance in the shape of cheap water—water which was stored up, and which at this time of the year evaporated rapidly—that indirect gain would follow to everyone concerned.

The Minister for Mines: I have nothing to do with the Water Scheme; it is not in my department.

Mr. ANGWIN : The Minister for Mines had nothing to do with the Goldfields Water Scheme, but he had the control of the water supply in some of the other areas.

(Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.)

Mr. ANGWIN : As he had said, a reduction in the price of water charged to these prospectors on the smaller shows would at least result in an indirect gain which would fully recompense the State for any direct loss it might sustain. Back in 1898 he had been present at a meeting in Coolgardie at which Mr. A. E. Morgans, in dealing with the prospects of Coolgardie when the water supply scheme should be complete, had pointed out that the low-grade ores were present to so large an extent that there was a possi-

bility of the introduction of the water resulting in the employment of thousands of men on these low-grade propositions. The member for Coolgardie had now declared that the price charged for the water was a great drawback to the district. If there were a possibility of opening up these mines and providing employment for a large number of men, he (Mr. Angwin) maintained that there could not fail to be an indirect gain from the cheapening of water so substantial as to be appreciable to the State as a whole. In regard to the Collie coalfields, in his opinion there was here a great opening for the Government to render valuable assistance. There were at present no charge on bunkering coal brought into our ports and in consequence the Collie coal had to compete with coal from other parts of Australia. In a recent article in the *West Australian* it had been pointed out that the Combine supplying coal had no pilot dues to pay, and were thus subsidised to the extent of £9,000 per annum. If this Combine were made to pay reasonable harbour dues, it would serve to assist the local industry considerably. Only that day he had noticed that the steamer "Mooltan" was taking a large quantity of coal. If the coal was suitable for steamers of this class, the Minister might reasonably go into the question and see if something could not be done in the way of imposing a charge on the imported coal which would substantially assist the local industry. He (Mr. Angwin) had been informed that a little while ago there had been required a large quantity of coal for Ceylon. The Minister, it seemed, was interviewed in regard to this, but nothing had come of the interview. The Minister in his reply might explain to the Committee whether he had been opposed to the proposition that the local companies should supply the coal for Ceylon, what information he had given to his interviewers, and whether or not that information was calculated to encourage those in Ceylon to endeavour to enter into a contract with the West Australian companies. He trusted that the Minister would give some answer, particularly to the remarks he (Mr. Angwin) had made as to the smelt-

ers. The necessity of opening up the North-West mineral fields was fully realised, together with the impossibility of profitably opening up those fields without better facilities being provided for the smelting of the ore.

Mr. WALKER: One might be expected to join in the general cry of congratulation upon the optimism of the speech of the Minister for Mines. However, he (Mr. Walker) was very dubious about placing too much confidence on that optimism. As a matter of fact, he had been almost a victim to optimism in his own electorate. Not very long ago Mr. Montgomery of the Minister for Mines' department had visited his (Mr. Walker's) constituency, and led the good people of Kanowna to imagine that partly as a result of that visit they were to have a revival of mining. To this day he (Mr. Walker) had not seen anything of a practical, tangible, beneficial nature as the result of that visit. Yet the visit had been full of optimism and full of promises. In every part of the State where the Minister or his officers went there was a scattering of this optimism. What he wanted to see was a realisation of the optimistic predictions, a start towards really helping those parts of the goldfields constituencies which required assistance. There were parts of his own constituency which he thought even the Minister for Mines would admit required help, and which would benefit the State if they received that help. Yet they were forgotten. Not long ago the taunt was thrown out by a Minister that since he (Mr. Walker) had represented Kanowna the constituency had gone down. It was a remark most uncalled for and most unjust, because though the population of the constituency was not what it was in the booming days, yet the district was not to be sneered at as to its possibilities. It was not the fault of the honest bona fide gold-seekers that the district had depreciated: it was the fault to a certain extent of not putting the mining laws into force. On one occasion accompanied by a prominent prospector of Kanowna he had informed the Minister that the holders of

the main reef at Kanowna were holding it against the regulations, holding it wrongfully to the detriment of the general mining population, that they held more of the reef than they were entitled to, and that by amalgamating and obtaining exemptions they were not working the reef and were thus shutting up a considerable auriferous area. Inquiries were promised, but there was no alteration made; those who would be tributors or who would work the reef in small companies were kept off of it and the workings were idle to-day. When we found these things in practice we could not talk of optimism. No doubt this evil, which could have been remedied long ago, existed in other parts of the goldfields, companies sitting down on the best parts of the golden areas and withering up the industry wherever they squatted. The introduction of British capital was of advantage, but the real strength of the country's progress for the future in gold production would lie in encouraging the small prospectors. It was noticed now that wherever big companies went we found ministerial assistance flowing. There were promising little shows at Broad Arrow and more gold would be produced if there were facilities for crushing. Time after time he had asked for batteries for Broad Arrow and Ballagundi, but the requests were referred through all the red tape branches of the department, and eventually some officer could not see his way to recommend the applications. We were at the mercy of those officers who did everything by red tape or rule of thumb. If they did not see any promise of immediate profit for the Crown there was no recommendation, though one understood that the department existed for the principal object of encouraging the industry and not to make a business profit out of mining. Again, the department did not show anxiety to make any new venture or take steps for utilising all the possibilities of gold production. Recently a Bulong mine, well equipped with machinery and with everything ready for speedy work, was offered for sale. The department was made acquainted with the fact that they could

obtain the mine at a cheap price. It might not be the policy of the Government to nationalise gold mining; but supposing they did not wish to enter into competition with other gold mines, the opportunity was presented of getting hold of machinery cheaply and possibly of employing a number of hands on tribute. It was a chance of finding work for the people who believed in Bulong. Recently the Goldfields Water Supply water had been taken to the district; but when the department had the opportunity of keeping the population at Bulong they were supine and did nothing. How could we then speak of encouragement to the mining industry? The chance was offered but the department neglected it.

The Minister for Mines: It was not neglect.

Mr. WALKER: Then, the opportunity was allowed to pass.

The Minister for Mines: The report was very much against the machinery.

Mr. WALKER: We were always met with these everlasting reports. With a little repair it was possible the machinery would have done for the purpose of working the mine. There were those who were only too willing to have the chance of recovering the gold they believed to be in the Queen Margaret, and the Government would have set an example of becoming mine owners. If that could be done on a large scale in this country we would not need to talk about our embarrassed finances, but could pay all the expenses of the State luxuriantly and extravagantly and would still have money left. One complained also of the small prospects ahead of really assisting bona fide prospectors. The Mines Department was too much like a pawn shop, insisting on solid security before advancing a penny. If a mine was good enough why so much fuss about the pound for pound subsidy, and of the advance being covered by property before being made? Most capitalists would help miners in such circumstances. It was in this direction that proper administration should be displayed. So far as the department was concerned it was a pure calculation on paper as to the value of property and the assets before one penny was lent. The character

of the enterprise, the difficulties of the venture, the possible results that would be achieved, were never taken into consideration. That was not good administration. The Government should take a bona fide risk and thus benefit the State. The same remark applied in regard to prospectors who were exploring, possibly for new Golden Miles. Hitherto we had most carelessly distributed any vote for the purpose of assisting these men, and we had not considered in every instance the bona fide prospector, but it was the favoured few, the well-known few who had gone out one trip, come in and gone out again until their lives had been passed in a sort of gipsy existence, pleasant picnics into the interior and back. The men who had spent their lives in prospecting and whose work as good prospectors was well known had not been given proper assistance. If we really wanted to develop the industry and to be optimistic, let us show it by the amount of liberality we bestowed on mining development. Sufficient in that direction had not been done. Some deserving cases had received the required assistance; but at the same time very often most undeserving cases had been helped and very deserving ones neglected. The case referred to by the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) was an instance of that kind, where prospectors were favoured men, whose character had been more or less tarnished, who had not the work to do they represented and who were assisted, in spite of the statements made by the Solicitor General that to help them in the circumstances would not be legal. He hoped there would be some practical reformation in the treatment of such cases as those mentioned.

Mr. OSBORN: It was very pleasant to hear so many speakers eulogise the Mines Department, and there was not the slightest doubt it was a case of bestowing credit where credit was due. He desired to bring under the notice of the Minister the disadvantages the Roebourne district laboured under in respect to mining. The district had not experienced very flourishing times excepting when it first gave the impetus to mining in Western Australia. It was one

of the first fields of a payable nature discovered in the State. Unfortunately for the field, after it had to so great an extent helped to bring population here, the prospectors there became dissatisfied with the number of men camped around them so they essayed to go further afield and try and find something fresh. They achieved success, for they discovered Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. We all remembered the custom in those days of the mob following the leaders, and as soon as it was ascertained in his electorate that such rich finds had been made in Coolgardie all the miners left there and went to the new field, and unfortunately the district, which was over 1,000 miles from the centre of government, was practically lost sight of, and all the energies of the Mines Department were concentrated in the Eastern fields. From that moment the Northern fields seemed to be looked upon as a thing of the past. Mining in the North, especially at Pilbara, could not pay without the provision of those facilities which unfortunately did not exist there at the present time. There were reefs in the district which were a good deal richer than the average ones elsewhere; but owing to the neglect of the department it was only with very great difficulty the mines were able to keep alive. The chief troubles in the district had been lack of water, timber and fuel. Timber was very scarce and expensive. The other night the Minister for Mines mentioned one or two mines in which the baser metals were found, and he spoke of them in eulogistic terms, adding that unfortunately the low price of copper prevented them from now being worked. It was not the poor price of copper that prevented some of these mines being worked. They were rich enough to pay handsomely provided there was good management and those facilities which would enable the metals to be placed on the market at a less cost than was the case now. Take the Whim Creek Copper Mine for example. This was an enormously rich mine and would be working well to-day but for its misfortune to have been perhaps indifferently managed from a business point of view.

Mr. Taylor: It is on private property.

Mr. OSBORN: There were mines in the same vicinity which were not on private property and quite as rich. There was one a few miles from the Whim Creek which was being worked on tribute and which, even in the existing circumstances, could be worked at a profit. The great difficulty was that everything had to be carted some 25 to 30 miles, and that there were enormous freight and lighterage charges. To get a ton of cargo from the ship to the shore cost something like 15s. for lightering and handling. That made it very difficult to work copper, lead, or tin up there. The lighterage and shipping charges generally were extortionate; but notwithstanding all these difficulties the mines still existed and, were the facilities better, would pay handsome profits. The Minister had particularly mentioned the Lily Blanche mine situated within nine miles of Roebourne. The company owning it went insolvent, and the property was now held by the official receiver. It had been so held for some eight or nine months, but no effort had been made to compel the official receiver either to sell and to realise on the property or to throw the area open for reselection. If the original owners or someone else were working the property now, employment would be given to some two or three hundred men. It was not necessary for him to say why the company failed, for most members were aware of the reason; but there might be an excuse for the failure inasmuch as the shipping companies when the ore was at a fair price refused to take it from the jetty at Roebourne. Ore was left on the wharf from month to month until at last came the slump in the market and the owners were forced into the Bankruptcy Court.

Mr. Taylor: I placed that view of the case before the Minister at the time.

Mr. OSBORN: That was so, and there were other members who with him recognised that the Northern fields should have far more attention paid to them than was the case. There was another matter to which he wished to draw attention, and that was in respect to a gold show known as Weeriana. There was a plant

there which was subsidised by the Mines Department to the amount of £1,000. That mine had worked for scarcely more than a few weeks consecutively, and at the present time it was applying for exemption and the chances were that it would be granted. On the last occasion the mine did not work for more than two months and if the Government had subsidised the plant to the extent of £1,000, exemption should certainly not be granted to any extent. Coming further south to the Onslow district, along the Ashburton, there were a number of shows there, copper mines, silver-lead mines, and gold mines. One of these silver-lead mines was able to work under adverse conditions for some time; they had to cart their ore, pay £3 for lighterage at Onslow, 15s. freight to the Eastern States, and after having the ore treated and paying all these costs it just took the whole of the profits. It was easy to see that under such conditions a mine could not pay. It was also easy to see if help were given to the base metals and to such mines as were known to exist in this district there would be some possibility of a number of them paying. We should not lose sight of the fact that the base metals were likely to be in existence when the richer metals were exhausted, or, at any rate, when there were fewer mines working. The people in the district he represented were not asking for unreasonable assistance; they asked that the Government should assist them in respect to providing smelters within the State where the ores could be treated, and they were particularly anxious that he, as their member, should ask the Government to erect smelters at Fremantle, or to buy the present smelters, or even subsidise them so that the ore might be treated in the State; then these people would be able to make a success of their mines, provided, of course, that the Government went to their assistance in other directions. The Mines Department had not spent £100 in that district in connection with providing a water supply on the roads or tracks. The roads board in the Onslow district had actually mortgaged their rates for the ensuing year to provide water along these tracks. It

was unreasonable to expect the roads board to do this out of their revenue, and he thought the department should recoup that board so as to prevent it from becoming in an impoverished state through their action. If the mines were given any kind of a chance he was satisfied the district would prove itself to be a rich one. Some assistance should be given to the prospectors who were developing those copper mines in and about Roebourne. There were many men who had spent hundreds of pounds there in attempting to discover payable lodes. The country was enormously rich but it was very difficult to work. He asked the Minister to give some attention to the requests from these people when they came along. If the Government decided to erect smelters at Fremantle, not only would the facilities asked by these people in the North be given to them but employment would be found for a considerable number of men. With respect to the accommodation for shipping ore at Onslow, he desired to point out that it was most unsatisfactory. The jetty was useless because no boats could come alongside and everything had to be lightered. The difficulty should be overcome at an early date. He hoped that at the earliest possible moment, now that the Point Sampson tramway extension was nearing completion, that the Minister would see his way clear to replace the horses which were used on that line by two or three small locomotives, which could easily be built in the State. The horse tramway was obsolete, and, moreover, with the present high charges that were levied the prospectors were considerably handicapped. It cost the people 12s. to cart their stuff along that line.

The Minister for Mines: Not on the tramline.

Mr. OSBORN: It used to cost 8s. to Cossack, but now that the line was extended to the jetty there were wharfage dues and other charges which brought the total to 12s.

The Minister for Mines: The 12s. was not wholly a tramway charge.

Mr. OSBORN: At any rate it cost that much to get the stuff to the steamers. The charge was unreasonable, but he understood it was almost impossible for the Government to undertake the carriage of the ore at a reduced rate while they continued to employ horses. In that district where the heat was from 109 to 120 in the shade members would recognise that horses were out of the question. He hoped the Minister would take some notice of the remarks he had made. Other departments had been able to spend thousands of pounds in putting down bores to assist the pastoral industry, and it was only fair to expect that the district should have some similar consideration shown to it by the Mines Department. The mining industry in those parts would profit considerably if a water supply were provided. The existing bores were not of much convenience to the miner. They might be convenient to the prospector, but there were only about two in the district that he represented, and those two could have been done without as far as the mining industry was concerned, because the windmills and wells erected by the squatters were always at the disposal of the miners. He sincerely hoped that the Minister would give consideration to the matters that he had mentioned so that the industry in this portion of the State might be benefited.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was his desire to make only a few remarks on the Mines vote. Having listened to the debate which had followed the speech of the Minister, one could not but recognise that the administration of the department had been condemned from Roebourne right down through the Pilbara district to the Murchison, down through Cue, across there to Black Range, over the Northern portion of the goldfields and on to the Eastern goldfields. While he recognised that the debate, as far as it had advanced, had been good-tempered, one could not say that it had been eulogistic in any way or in any particular of the administration. The Minister for Mines in delivering his speech was careful to avoid mentioning the question of administration. In speaking of the industry he referred to it from

its inception right up to the present time, and he selected for quotation those mines which were rich and which were giving great yields, and one listening to the Minister could not do so without feeling some pride at living in this golden country of Western Australia. The Minister's speech was one which was purely on paper; it was not borne out by facts. There was a very large area under the management of the Chamber of Mines, and their version of the manner in which the industry was carried on was placed before the Arbitration Court some few months ago. It was only to-day that the Court had delivered its award; and apart from three mines in the whole of that area—from within 20 or 30 miles of Menzies right out towards Laverton, taking in Leonora, Morgans, and Kookynie and all that country—it had been found that there was sufficient evidence to convince the Court of the necessity of reducing the wages of the workers; of reducing the wages, not on the grounds of the cost of living, but on the grounds of the incapacity of the mining companies to pay the wages. That in itself was to him, and would be to the people of the country, proof that the speech delivered by the Minister for Mines in this Chamber a few days ago had been purely an optimistic speech. He (Mr. Taylor) was not prepared to say one word against the possibilities of the mining industry of the State; but he thought that on an occasion like the consideration of the Annual Estimates, when they dealt with the expenditure of some £165,818, it was only reasonable that the Minister's speech should be based on facts. The Arbitration Court had in effect declared that these mining companies were not in a position to pay the wages. Quite recently there had been some rich discoveries on the Golden Mile. Following the reasoning of the Court in its most recent decision, it would be a fine time for the workers on these new discoveries to present their case to the Court for wages based on the capacity of the companies to pay. In such circumstances these particular men ought to command a very high wage indeed. However, the debate being carried on by the Committee was

not so much to do with the mining industry as with the administration of the Mines Department. Although not perhaps expressed in vigorous terms, yet there had been heard on both sides of the House condemnation of that administration. Even the hon. member who had just resumed his seat had charged the Government with neglect to provide a water supply for the stock carrying ore and minerals in the North. It seemed that the administration of the Mines Department was hampering the mining in those Northern areas. Yet in his (Mr. Taylor's) opinion the ear of the Minister should be just as accessible in the far North-West as it was at Southern Cross. He hoped that the Minister would endeavour to rectify this and many other things in the coming year, and that when the Estimates were before the Committee next year there would not be so many complaints to make against the administration. He (Mr. Taylor) had been perfectly astounded by the statement made that afternoon by the member for Collie, to the effect that certain coal mines at Collie were shut down owing to bad ventilation. If it were true—and the hon. member had assured him that it was absolutely true—then the Minister for Mines should immediately set about a reform. It was appalling indeed that such a statement could have been truthfully made in that Chamber. As for the question of assistance to prospectors, he recognised that the Minister had many more demands for assistance than he could hope to satisfy: still he (Mr. Taylor) could not help thinking that a good deal more could be done with the money at the disposal of the Minister if it were more judiciously laid out. It was not at all times the genuine prospector who got assistance. Very frequently the legitimate prospector, for want of funds to cope with heavy water or other difficulties, had to relinquish his work. In such case he applied to the department for assistance, and most often met with the reply that if he were prepared to find half the cost of machinery he could obtain assistance; but that should the enterprise fail the Government would take over the whole of the machinery. A man might have confidence

in his show; but he would require to have overweening confidence in it before he would be prepared to pay half the cost of the plant and agree to the Government taking the whole in the event of mischance. There was positively no incentive whatever to the prospector to develop in the face of difficulties. Yet in these days a man had to get down below the roots of the grass; because the period of selling surface shows had gone past, and Western Australia had taken her place as a permanent mining country. He knew in particular of one very old prospector at Leonora, than whom there was no more earnest and sincere prospector in the State, and who to-day had a proposition which he believed would do well if he could but get an advance from the Government. He had made his request, but had been met with the pound for pound explanation, and consequently had been frozen out. That day he (Mr. Taylor) had received a letter from Linden, from people who desired to make application to the Minister for assistance in a similar way.

The Minister for Mines: They have been promised £200.

Mr. TAYLOR: That was another application. He recognised that the Minister had a great difficulty in discriminating in respect to these applications; but it would be found that the really genuine prospector seldom obtained what he wanted, while someone less deserving and less capable more often got the advance. As to the public batteries, he (Mr. Taylor) had spoken pretty often and pretty strongly. There was this little 2-head mill at Linden. On Saturday he had received a letter from the secretary of the Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association. Part of this letter he would read out, and it would show even the Minister that under existing conditions it was futile to attempt to develop this field. The writer had pointed out that at the 2-head mill Mr. Hill had crushed 172 tons. He (Mr. Hill) had started on the 10th November and was stopped on the 4th December to give others a show to crush before Christmas. It had been really good crushing stuff, and the mill had run every Sunday, crushing 172 tons in 24 days, or

an average of 6½ tons per day. This crushing of 172 tons had gone 15 dwts. Then J. McCarthy had crushed from the Blue Jacket 19 tons for 11 dwts. Five days' actual crushing had averaged less than 4 tons. P. Rufen had crushed 20 tons from the Camel Backs for 1 oz. 4 dwts., the actual crushing for four days averaging 5 tons. Hill's stone from the Carbine lease, the writer had pointed out, was about the best crushing stone in the district, barring the Green Hills; his parcel of 172 tons had given the Government a revenue of £86. As for expenses, there had been three drivers at 15s. a day, 24 days, total £54; three feeders at 13s. 4d. per day, 24 days, total £48; so that wages, without the battery manager's salary, fuel, stores, etcetera, had run into £102. We earned £86, but in doing so spent £102. Another parcel consisted of 19 tons from McCarthy's. In this case the revenue was £9 10s., and we spent in wages £21 5s. without the manager's salary, fuel, stores, etcetera. Again, another parcel of 20 tons from Rufen's was treated, the revenue being £10 and the wages £17, excluding manager's salary and so forth. It was impossible for the administration of the department to be anything like it should be with batteries of this character that were losing money and were anything but satisfactory. It would be different if they gave satisfaction to the men, but the Minister would agree that the 2-head mill at Linden caused more friction among the prospectors and leaseholders than any battery in the State.

The Minister for Mines: There will be a big change.

Mr. TAYLOR: These things were mentioned so that the Minister might have the opportunity of replying.

The Minister for Mines: I will give you the information if you supply me the particulars.

Mr. TAYLOR: Questions would be put to the Minister on the subject at the next sitting. The industry was not getting that wise attention it needed to put it in a flourishing condition, give employment to our people and enrich the State. It was gradually diminishing and something would need to be done largely by the de-

partment. The Minister had been controlling the department for eight years with the exception of one year, and if he did not know how to administer the department in the best interests of the industry no one else did. Therefore, it was to be hoped the Minister would do something to give assistance to prospectors, not to those gentlemen generally accepted as prospectors, but to real genuine prospectors, those who never accepted wages unless they were absolutely stone-broke and could not get a storekeeper to back them. The prospector was a class of man fast disappearing. He was a man who had no friends in high positions who could get to the Minister's ear; and it was only by the merest chance he met the member representing the district. This was the man we should assist, not one who could get friends to put a few hundred pounds into his property and so obtain a subsidy from the Government. The member for Roebourne spoke of the Roebourne leaseholders who could not get their copper ore away to market, because the squatters had first claim on the accommodation provided on the ships trading along the coast. He (Mr. Taylor) had warned the Minister of this twelve months ago, and had said that it would ruin those leaseholders through not being able to get their ore on to the market when copper was at its highest price. The proof was now apparent. The property of these leaseholders was in the hands of receivers and those who thought they possessed wealth-producing propositions were forced to seek work in other directions. The hundreds of pounds they lost through not being able to get their ore to the market until copper was below £60 a ton, would have enabled them to hold their properties. The Minister should take notice of the very temperate debate on these Estimates. It was questionable whether there had been any debate during the past seven or eight years on the Mines Estimates when so much good temper was displayed over the administration of a department which, as a matter of fact, richly deserved more condemnation on the score of administration than it received, because members from both sides of the Chamber had shown

where condemnation was deserved. The Minister must surely recognise that the administration of the department had not been all he would lead us to believe it was. The Minister had previously talked of the great change that was to take place in our battery system, that the superintendent who, according to the Minister, was responsible for all that was wrong had been removed, and that when a man of brains and capacity, still according to the Minister, was appointed capable of administering the department it would flourish. What flourishing had taken place? Had the battery system been a greater success during the last twelve months? No. There was more condemnation to-day than ever.

The Minister for Mines: Not from our customers.

Mr. TAYLOR: The gentlemen mentioned in the letter read were customers of the batteries, and their condemnation was pretty strong. The system had not improved in the last twelve months. Of course, the official was not responsible for these two-head mills. That type of mill was worked eight years ago at Black Range.

Mr. TROY: Not at Black Range, but at Yalgoo and Paynesville.

The Minister for Mines: It opened up Black Range.

Mr. TAYLOR: No. Black Range "went bung," and only prospered again as soon as the two-head mill was taken away. Disheartening the prospectors meant ruining prospecting. Prospecting was only carried on by the enthusiasm of the prospector, buoyed up by the hope of something ahead. The prospectors were men who went out into the bush with nothing but hard stern facts in front of them, men who looked at their provisions and studied how long they would last, and men who could tell to half-a-pint how long their water supply could last. The only thing that kept them going in this hard life was their hope and ambition. Take that from them and it killed them. To treat them as had been done was to knock all hope out of them. Our prospectors were leaving us and the country was being unprospected and unexplored. It was to be hoped that the Minister

would cease operations so far as these two-head mills were concerned and give the people in every part of the State, where there were signs of prosperity in the way of stone raised, a proper and up-to-date crusher. The system of purchasing second-hand batteries, old rattle-traps, had been carried on in this State too long and the Minister should cease operations in that direction also. The State should have everywhere up-to-date mills. Then there was the question of obtaining duplicate parts of the mills. At times there were mills within a few miles of one another, and yet when something happened to one mill it was found impossible to obtain a duplicate part from the other mill so as to repair it. Consequently it was necessary to send to Perth to get parts necessary for repairs and even then it was frequently found that the batteries were so obsolete that it was impossible to make good the deficiency. It was to be hoped the Minister would take these criticisms as they were meant and do his best to make the mining industry what it should be. Let him inspire hope in the prospectors, give them every facility to go out and explore the country and hold out every inducement to them to prospect the unknown portions of the great auriferous belts in the State.

Mr. BATH: The member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor) had said the debate on the mining Estimates had been very temperate and probably the fact that the weather had taken the temper out of members was accountable for the mildness of the remarks in the various speeches.

The Premier: The weather puts temper into them at times.

Mr. BATH: Several members and especially the member for Katanning (Hon F. H. Piesse) made very eulogistic references to the speech of the Minister for Mines. That speech was nothing more than an historical review of mining since gold was first discovered in Western Australia. We had heard that review before. It had been given every year when the Estimates were discussed, it had been given on the Mining Bill and on the Mines Regulation Bill, and, in fact, the Minister had given the speech

so often that at the present time he added to it a touch of eloquence and continuity which perhaps justified the eulogy passed upon it; but after all that was not exactly the information that members representing the goldfields constituencies desired. We did not want to be continually looking backward on the history of mining in Western Australia, and the attitude taken by the Minister would make it appear to some persons, and especially to those who were not au fait with the present position of mining, that the position was such that we had to look backward in order to find comfort in the outlook. He did not accept that point of view. It was true there was need of every diligence, energy and earnestness in connection with the industry, but there was so much territory which had proved to be gold bearing, there were so many centres where the development was of a most satisfactory nature, and those centres were so scattered, that anyone with practical knowledge of mining must be assured that the future of the industry was full of promise. We were at a critical period so far as mining was concerned, and while there might be many who were convinced that the development and the prospects warranted every confidence, still we were in that position where the Government had practically determined on the Estimates that they were going to discontinue the policy of direct encouragement to mining. Anyone who had taken note of the position at the present time would realise that, although the production had declined, the same amount of dividends was still being declared, and that on the Murchison and East Murchison fields the production of a less quantity of gold than that produced say, in the East Coolgardie goldfield where a considerable amount of capital had been invested, resulted in a greater business, a greater local expenditure than perhaps three times the production from the mines owned by foreign capital. Fields such as Meekatharra, Black Range, Yalgoginda, and others which were dependent to-day very largely on local capital and local syndicates for their development, and the re-

sults from which were being retained in the State, were the direct outcome of the encouragement given to the development of mining in Western Australia. If we discontinued that policy or made developments in the future by reason that whatever assistance was given was taken from loan moneys, we were going to retard the possibility of new fields such as those he had mentioned being discovered. It was only necessary to turn up the financial figures in the *Statistical Abstract* to observe that while the administrative expenditure—that was the expenditure on wardens, clerks and inspectors—was increasing and the expenditure especially of the central office in Perth was increasing, the revenue derived from mining was a decreasing item. If the Premier were to turn up the figures he would see that in 1901-2 our territorial revenue from mining totalled £53,898—that was the direct revenue apart from the dividend tax—and that in 1907-8 this revenue had dwindled to £31,434, notwithstanding, as he had pointed out, the increase in the administrative cost.

The Premier: Was not a great deal of the first revenue derived from survey fees and fees of a like character, paid when taking up the original leases?

Mr. BATH: That might be true and probably it was, for the revenue was derived from such fees; but if mining were developing, if new leases were being taken up, if existing fields were being extended and new fields opened, that item should if not increase certainly not be decreasing. It should be a constant item.

The Premier: The cost of taking up protection areas, etcetera, has been reduced.

Mr. BATH: The argument had frequently been used by the Minister for Mines that the reductions in cost had been effected by the Minister for the encouragement of the industry; but how had that been accomplished? While on the one hand the amount to the leaseholder or prospector might be reduced and a few pounds be thus saved, still on the other hand the difference was made up by other taxation. The difference

was in fact more than made up by the increased burdens placed upon the people.

The Premier : In what direction has there been increased taxation?

Mr. BATH : The land and income tax. The latter tax affected any man doing even decently on the goldfields. Unless a leaseholder earned £5 a week it was not of much use for him to continue working on the goldfields where the cost of living was so high.

Mr. Gordon : These people are not the only ones who are taxed.

Mr. BATH : That remark was not apropos of the argument. It was useless for the Minister to boast about a reduction of the fees to the miner or prospector when more than the amount saved was taken from him by some other form of taxation. It would have been much better to allow him to remain as he was in the first place. As a matter of fact, the direct encouragement to mining had been a constantly decreasing item since 1904-5. While he had no desire to make a comparison between the era of Labour Administration and the period of office of the present Government, or to make any comparison as to the extent to which the mining industry was encouraged in the respective periods, he could not but point out that in the expenditure from revenue on water supplies, erecting of State batteries and on the Mines Development Vote, the Labour Government spent a great deal more—double the amount—than was spent by the present Administration. We found in the estimates that the vote for mining development had been dropped. That was a revenue vote, and the whole of our expenditure from revenue this year, as far as the Mines Department was concerned, was an administrative vote for the salary staff of the Mines Department and the various sub-departments, with the exception of the expenditure on the existing State batteries, which had been expressed as a vote for the direct encouragement of mining. His estimate went against the administration of the Mines Department at the present time, and there was a lack of definite policy. That lack had been apparent

ever since the present Minister had been in office. When all these eulogies were passed one had only to turn to the actual records of the department, to look through the comments of not only departmental officers but also of the Auditor General in regard to the Mines Development Vote, to look through the report of the Public Batteries Board on the administration of the State batteries, and one would find condemnation from beginning to end. And these were not partisans' reports; these were the reports of impartial individuals, and something to which great weight could be attached. We were promised when the report of the Public Battery Board was submitted that there was to be a change of policy and reorganisation, and that competent officers were to be installed, the batteries were to be brought up to date, and the Batteries Department was to be placed on such a footing that it could be compared and would be enabled to compete with any commercial enterprise outside. But as far as he could see, from what had been quoted by the members for Mount Margaret, Mount Magnet, Pilbara, and others, the same old backward policy was characteristic of the Mines Department to-day as it was yesterday, and as it was a year ago, and the Minister seemed to be content to grub along in no style whatever, just as long as the Mines Department got through and was able to exist through whatever criticism was offered against it. They had been told that sweet were the uses of advertisements, and if there was one policy which the Minister for Mines pursued it was to make his administration of the Mines Department a policy of self-advertising right through. It was altogether a bad policy for the Minister to take periodical trips throughout the country and continually make promises such as those mentioned by the member for Mount Margaret, and others which had been brought under his (Mr. Bath's) notice by the Leaseholders' Association in the Minister's own constituency: promises which were made and which were never fulfilled. The Minister, when making a tour, was not in the position to make definite promises and say that he was going to do a certain thing with-

out fully investigating it. It was a tendency rather to make himself a good fellow which induced him to make these foolish promises knowing well that he would not be able to carry them out. With regard to the reorganisation of the State Batteries Department he was satisfied from what he had seen of the department at the present time and what had been brought under his notice by communications from every mining centre, that the position was far from satisfactory, and that it was certainly not much advanced on the position which called for the criticism and condemnation of the Public Batteries Board. The Minister had not done what he said he was going to do, and that was to appoint a thoroughly competent officer to act as permanent head of the Batteries Department of the State. Could it be expected that a gentleman, whose forte was not the control of batteries for gold crushing, but copper and silver smelting, would be competent to control the State batteries of Western Australia? Even on the question of his ability to act as controller of a smelting plant, he (Mr. Bath) desired to know how such an officer, who presumed to have practical experience, could have permitted this State to lose anything from £2,000 to £5,000 in the slag dump in connection with the Phillips River smelter. Surely a man brought up even as a smelter foreman in charge of a shift on a furnace would know the value of slag dump, and would know better than to permit it to be sold with the valuable contents which it contained. What could be said of a practical man with technical and scientific skill, and who presumed to have been trained in a school of mines, permitting such a thing as he had mentioned? One would think that he would know sufficient to warn the Government, or advise them not to part with such a thing unless they received some return. This gentleman was placed in control of the State Batteries Department, and the fact that such an officer had been appointed, that the Government had not in view the need of a man with practical experience of gold-milling plants and also engineering knowledge, was responsible for the fact that there was not that im-

provement in the administration, which had been promised. When the Public Service Commissioner called for applications for the position members thought that the Minister intended to carry out the promise that he was going to get an all-round practical man, one who would be competent to not only supervise the working of the State batteries with the view of securing the best methods in the treatment of ore and the best methods also for the treatment of the customers of the State batteries, but one who would also have the requisite technical knowledge in connection with batteries in order to obviate a repetition of the mistakes which had been made in the past. We found, however, that it was nothing more nor less than a bit of a bluff. Applications were called for and no doubt a number of men were put to the expense and trouble of sending in applications for the position, only to find that the Public Service Act was construed in such a way that the gentleman who had been acting for some time was appointed to continue as a temporary officer for three years. Under such circumstances we had little to hope for in the way of a marked improvement in the administration of the State Batteries Department. A return in the report of the Auditor-General as to the advances made under the Mining Development Act, showed that the sum that had been provided under that Act in the shape of assistance to various properties and companies amounted to £23,964. Of that £2,875 had been returned, leaving a balance still owing of over £21,000. In looking through the list he found that what seemed to him to be a mistake in the administration was the fact that some syndicates had been permitted to receive very large sums with the result that only a few derived any benefit from the administration or the distribution of this money. It seemed to him that this vote was intended primarily as an encouragement for prospecting, and that it was intended to be distributed as widely as possible to extend encouragement to as many parties as possible: but if large sums ranging from £1,000 to £2,000 were to be given to single individuals or companies, then the amount which

was annually provided would not go far in the direction of mining development. As had been pointed out by officers of the Mines Department, the position was by no means satisfactory. Then, again, it seemed to him that the fact that the sole administration of this money was left in the hands of the Minister was unsatisfactory. The more he saw of the distribution of this money to the prospectors and leaseholders of the State, the more necessary did he consider that there should be assistance from practical men, those engaged in prospecting; those who were on the spot on the mining fields, in connection with the administration of this money. He had said before and he would repeat that a certain sum should be set apart each year and it should be distributed on an equitable basis to the various goldfields, and that the warden and the inspector of mines, and the assistance of a practical man should be obtained, these gentlemen to act in a kind of advisory capacity, to assist in the utilisation of this vote of Parliament. In this way he was sure there would be a great deal more satisfaction given than existed at the present time.

The Premier: You suggest that this board should advise the Minister as to the best means of expending the money?

Mr. BATH: The amount would be allotted to each district; Murchison, East Coolgardie, Yilgarn, and other districts would have so much allotted to them, and then these gentlemen would be called in in an advisory capacity in connection with the distribution of the sum in their particular district.

The Premier: Would not their knowledge be restricted to the particular district they resided in? For instance a man at Sandstone would know nothing about Meekatharra.

Mr. BATH: The sum allotted for the Murchison could be further allocated if such a difficulty arose. What we wanted was the advice of the men on the spot, and especially practical men who, by virtue of their experience and their work, had the right to be called prospectors in the truest sense of the term. One who had a knowledge of the goldfields must come to the conclusion that he knew very

few such, and did not know them as genuine prospecting parties. He would make a comparison between two proposals. The Government made an offer for assistance to mining development in Coolgardie, believing a company was being formed. He was not sure whether that company was successfully formed, but thought it was, and assistance was granted. Whether any result had accrued from that assistance he could not say. In Kalgoorlie a company known as the North End Development Company was formed, the company being composed entirely, or at least, of a great majority of people who were local residents.

The Minister for Mines: Do you mean the Devon?

Mr. BATH: Yes; they had applied for assistance and they, in his opinion, had an equally good claim.

The Minister for Mines: They got the assistance.

Mr. BATH: Then only very recently.

The Minister for Mines: No; some months ago.

Mr. BATH: These people called a meeting recently to consider a letter from the Minister, and they wrote to him (*Mr. Bath*) asking him to urge on the Minister the necessity for granting this assistance. He, however, had some qualms of conscience about doing so because he had taken up 100 shares in the company, not that he expected to make money out of it, and as a shareholder he was not anxious to make an appeal to the Minister for assistance. In his opinion they had had a good claim, for they were trying to develop systematically the North end of the Kalgoorlie belt. Their enterprise, if it turned out successfully, would give a big fillip to that district. Another matter to which he desired to draw attention was in connection with the administration of the Mines Regulation Act—or, rather, it was a matter which would require dealing with under that measure. Others had already referred to the administration of the Act in respect to accidents and the maintenance of safe conditions in the mines. He wished to refer to something which was fast becoming a menace to a large number of honest citizens of Western Australia, namely, the dust nuisance

and the lack of adequate ventilation in the deeper mines, which was increasing the harvest of deaths under the dread disease known as "miners' complaint." This was a scourge which should arouse the attention of every man interested in the welfare of his fellow men. The disease was the product of unfavourable circumstances underground which sapped the health and even the lives of the men working there. Except steps were taken to remedy the conditions this harvest of deaths would increase year by year. He could speak from experience, because out of a dozen young fellows with whom he had worked in the earlier days on the goldfields some were now in the cemetery, others were in the consumptives' home at Coolgardie, while others had succeeded in escaping to other occupations. He had even been told that except he learned to work a rock drill the time would come when he would not be able to get a job on a mine. In reply to this he had said that he would rather wheel a barrow and sell oranges than labour in the dust-laden atmosphere at a rock drill. In New Zealand this disease had rightfully been included among those disablements for which compensation had to be paid. Upon this being done the mineowners had declared that the miner must submit to a medical examination. The object of this was clear; it was ruthlessly to cast out every man who had any symptoms whatever of the disease, notwithstanding that he had reaped that disease in those very mines, and that, too, for wages which would not enable him to provide for his wife and family when the disease should strike him down and make it impossible for him any more to labour in the depths of the mine. The New Zealand Government had temporarily got over the difficulty by arranging for the insurance of such men in the State Insurance Department. Still, there was going to be trouble in New Zealand over this matter, and here in Western Australia the Government would be well advised to take some steps for the protection of the men by insisting upon improved ventilation and improved conditions underground; and for by any other way protecting those who had already contracted the disease. He

hoped the Minister would go into this matter during recess, and would consult those organisations more particularly interested. No doubt the result of such a conference would be a scheme more or less satisfactory for providing against this dread disease.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (in reply): Hon. members were to be thanked for the way in which they had received the Mines Estimates. He certainly had anticipated that there would have been a little more antagonism shown, and he could assure hon. members that he thanked them very much for their moderation. Yet they had all been earnest in their remarks, and apparently had discovered a number of small matters in connection with the administration of the department, which he hoped could be remedied. At all times, so long as they approached him in the spirit which they had exhibited during this debate, he would be only too pleased to enter into any criticism they might make in connection with the administration, and see if it were not possible to make the conditions better for those engaged in the industry. The Leader of the Opposition, in referring to the administration of the Mines Regulation Act, had pointed out lucidly and clearly the danger to the health of those following the calling of miners. In Western Australia we had regulations made under the Mines Regulation Act which he (the Minister) thought were as perfect as the regulations framed under any similar Act in the known world; consequently it had come somewhat as a surprise to him to hear from the Leader of the Opposition that as the result of the faulty ventilation of the bigger mines the dread disease known as "miner's complaint" was showing itself so clearly among the men engaged in the industry. He (the Minister) would be only too pleased if the hon. member would obtain some information which he could clearly put before him as evidence in regard to the statement which he (the Leader of the Opposition) had made to-night. In this event he (the Minister) would cheerfully go into the matter with the hon. member during recess, and if it were to be found that the regulations had not been carried

out with due care, he would see to it that in the future those regulations were strictly complied with. However, until such evidence was submitted to him it was his duty to uphold his officers, more especially the inspectors, whom he could hardly believe had been so careless and so regardless of the protection of those working underground as was to be inferred from the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. However, as he had said, when they should get into recess he would invite the hon. member to go with him fully into the question on the spot. In the course of the debate the member for Mount Magnet had complained in respect to the proposed battery at Messenger's Patch. He (the Minister) had never been in the district, but the hon. member had told him so much about it that he had promised that in the event of the reports showing that there were good possibilities for the district he would have a small mill erected. With a view to this he had sent an officer into the district to report. In due course that officer had recommended the erection of a small mill. The Minister had then told the hon. member that he intended to erect a small mill, whereupon the hon. member had sent him a very lengthy detailed report, showing the great amount of work that had been done, and urging that a bigger mill should be installed. It then became necessary that he (the Minister) should get a further departmental report on the subject; because he could not well take a recommendation from the hon. member in preference to that made by one of his officers. The same hon. member had given him (the Minister) credit for what had been done in connection with the Yonambe district, 60 miles south of Sandstone. When at Sandstone the hon. member had urged him to visit the place. Borrowing a four-in-hand team he (the Minister), with the member, drove along 60 miles of a bush track, spent the evening until 10 o'clock inspecting the mines, and was out again for the same purpose at daylight in the morning. In this case notwithstanding the adverse tenor of an official report, he (the Minister) had willingly given a promise that a plant would be put up. That plant was now in course

of erection, and it was to be hoped that his (the Minister's) judgment in the matter would be found to be superior to that of the officer whom he had previously sent there. On the question of assistance to prospectors' opinions among hon. members were, apparently, not precisely in harmony. Thus, while one mining representative declared that assistance should be given only to well-defined mines, others pointed out how impossible it was for the prospector, after spending his substance in fighting difficulties, to go on without assistance; and had referred to the difficulty that prospectors found in complying with the departmental regulations, which provided that the department should bear only one-half of the cost of machinery and plant. References had been made to the case of Messrs. Wilson and Moxon. In this connection the Mystery mine in the Yalgoo district, which had been worked in the old days, but was ultimately flooded with water, was thought to be capable of development. Messrs. Wilson and Moxon had asked the Government for assistance to the extent of a small pumping plant to unwater the mine. They themselves had no funds, and before he would render them any assistance he had insisted upon their getting a bondsman to the value of £100. It was necessary to explain that he (the Minister) had given assistance in this case chiefly for the reason that Yalgoo was a district which had been deserted for years, and he had felt that if an impetus in any shape or form could be given to mining in that district it would be a very wise thing to do. Consequently, he had given authority to provide a pumping plant for the unwatering of this mine. The next thing he had learned was that on the strength of that authority Messrs. Wilson and Moxon had purchased a battery with a small pumping plant attached to it, the departmental officers having allowed the purchase and having advanced £150 against it. The battery was taken down and shifted to Yalgoo, but these people fell out so that the battery was left on the hands of the department. However, it had since been sold, and the department lost nothing. The advance was £250, and railway freight had to be

paid, but about £350 was received from the sale. The battery was now erected on the old Emerald mine at Yalgoo; and though it would have been wiser if this assistance had not been given in the circumstances, yet good would probably result, because a plant was erected in the Yalgoo district. A member complained that prospectors were hampered by the various charges, it being compulsory for any application for a lease to be advertised. But it was in the interests of the alluvial miners and of miners generally that some publicity should be given to any application for a mining lease. One insertion of the advertisement might meet all purposes, but it was wise that each application should be advertised. It must be remembered that the department had lost a great deal of revenue by the special privilege given in regard to prospecting areas. About 18,000 acres of our mineral country was held under prospecting areas. If a man held a miner's right and paid a registration fee of 10s., he could hold 18 acres for twelve months. That meant a great loss to our revenue. Probably it would have been wiser if we had not established these prospecting areas, because if we had insisted on leaseholders paying rent to the department there would have been a larger revenue, out of which the department could have given assistance in various directions; but he held that the best time to assist the miner was in the first stages of a mine's development. When a prospector took up ground to see whether there was wealth in it or not, instead of having to pay rental and survey fees in cash to the department, he had merely to pay a registration fee of 10s. and could hold 18 acres for twelve months so long as he complied with the labour covenants, and even after twelve months he could go to the warden and ask for the term to be extended for another six months. We were generous in the matter, but great care would have to be taken by wardens to insist on leases being taken up and rent being paid as soon as it was found that the holders of these prospecting areas through crushings received value from their shows. The member for Murchison made reference

to some promises made at Wiluna. The principal promise was an indefinite one. He did not think he had been asked for it, but when he found the great distance Wiluna was from any court, he said that he thought it could be arranged so that there would be a warden's court and a clerk of the local court at Wiluna. Having since gone into the matter with the Public Service Commissioner, he believed that within the next couple of months an officer would be appointed to represent the Crown Law Department and the Mines Department at Wiluna so as to give the people there the same facilities as were enjoyed in other mining centres in this regard. In reference to areas locked up under exemption, there was only one district where he pleaded guilty to any charge of allowing undue exemptions, and that was the Pilbara field, where longer terms of exemption had been granted than might under ordinary circumstances be justified. But recognising how impossible it was to carry on mining operations in that country without railway facilities, and knowing that the Government had promised to build a railway there, that large sums of money had been spent by the companies and that they were still prepared to put money into the ventures which had already been opened up, and realising that if we insisted upon work being done now it would mean a large waste of the companies' money, he thought he was justified in giving what might ordinarily be termed undue exemptions to the mine owners in that field. He did not plead guilty to this charge in reference to any district outside Pilbara. He had intended to bring with him the file dealing with the Star of the East mine, for which the member for Murchison said many terms of exemption had been granted; but having been extremely busy during the past few days he had not the file with him. Speaking from memory, the last exemption granted was upon the recommendation of the warden, who pointed out that it would be the company's last chance, and that he believed if they could get money to carry on these mines it would be in the best interests of the district. Again,

speaking from memory, he believed that the total exemptions granted to these people amounted to three years and nine months, but he would be glad to show the hon. member all the papers in connection with that proposition. A list had been prepared showing that in some mining districts at present there was not an acre of ground under exemption. In connection with the purchase of the cyanide plant at Wiluna also referred to by the member for Murchison, he was equally opposed to the purchase as the hon. member. After visiting Wiluna he had gone into the matter with the metallurgist of the Mines Department as to what we should do in connection with the district, having already served notice on the owner of the plant to cease operations from the 1st January of last year. The department had been paying the leaseholders large sums for sands and slimes. One month over £1,000 was paid. Mr. Dunstan had an idea that it would be wiser to slime every bit of residues going through the mill, and to treat the resultant slimes with an exhaust slimes plant rather than by the ordinary treatment of cyaniding and filter-pressing. However, no determination was come to, and the department accepted the offer of this plant at Wiluna for £100, getting considerably more than the £100 worth. The purchase was simply made for one purpose, that was to get immediate values from the sands. The department had to borrow large sums of money to carry on this system of purchasing sands and slimes and were getting behind; consequently, he had been earnestly urging the erection of these plants as speedily as possible, so that the department could win back some of the money and repay to the Treasury the advances obtained. It was only to win back some of our gold at Wiluna that he had approved of this purchase, and we got more than the paltry sum of £100 spent.

Mr. Holman: Why were you so opposed to it at first?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Because it was an old plant. He did not want it, nor did he want to have anything to do with the people.

Mr. Gourley: Do you not think it would be advisable to re-treat some of the residues?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Seeing how residues could be treated in big parcels at such low rates we probably would be able to re-treat some of them, because we knew in many instances the residues had values. But at the present time he was more taken up with trying to get values from the slimes. It was essential, if we wished to carry on the system of paying for these sands and slimes, we should win back values as speedily as possible. Members would not wish him to deal in detail with all matters brought up, but he desired to take notice of a statement made by the member for Ivanhoe. The hon. member had said that he had come to the conclusion there had been collusion between the Minister, as a private member, and the Parliamentary Draftsman to have a clause inserted in the Mines Regulation Act removing the right to sue; but having heard some very coarse things from the hon. member he did not at the time bother to ask that such an unparliamentary statement should be withdrawn. However, he could show how little justification there was for such a statement, and in order to do so he would need to mention a little private history to put the hon. member on the right track. In 1905 we had a Mines Regulation Bill passed into law. Section 20 of this Act made an accident in a mine *prima facie* evidence of neglect on the part of the manager, and Section 27 gave the right to the injured person to sue for compensation under the Mines Regulation Act. When the Workers' Compensation Act was introduced by Mr. (now Sir Walter) James, he moved to repeal Sections 20 and 27 of the Mines Regulation Act, pointing out that as a fresh avenue for suing was given to a person injured, there would be no necessity in future for the right to sue under the old measure. Some time after that an application was made, and an action was taken in the Supreme Court suing under the Mines Regulation Act and Mr. Justice Burnside, he thought it was decided that under that enactment, owing to the repeal of Sec-

tion 27 there was no power to sue for damages on the part of an injured person. The Daglish Government brought forward a Bill in which there was a special provision to make it clear that under the Mines Regulation Act a miner could not sue for damages. There was some doubt in connection with that, but the Bill made it clear in the clause brought down that there was no power to sue. When he (Mr. Gregory) brought down his Bill that also retained the section; but in about October the gentleman, the political friend of the member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan) who wrote the letter which was read out to the House, and which he presumed was only written for the purpose of being read out and damaging him (the Minister) politically, that gentleman, with whom the member was in touch, wrote to him as Minister asking whether it would not be possible to have inserted in the Mines Regulation Act the power to sue, or as an alternative to amend the Workers' Compensation Act to make it more liberal to a person who had sustained damages. It must not be forgotten that before bringing that Bill before the House he went to Kalgoorlie and waited on the Chamber of Mines and had a conference with them and then waited on the Miners' Association and received recommendations from them also. In the latter's recommendations there was no request that anything should be done in regard to this matter; but at the last minute, owing to the question being raised, they had written to him asking if it were not possible for some such amendment as was suggested to be made. When the Bill was before the House the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) brought up this very question. He asked that Sections 20 and 27 of the old Act should be reintroduced. There had been no equivocation on his part at any time in regard to the question. He had pointed out, as could be seen in *Hansard*, that any person injured had the right to sue under common law, under the Employers' Liability Act, and under the Workers' Compensation Act, and the Ministerial side refused to give a further avenue for the right to sue for damages in connection with accidents. The ques-

tion was debated and the division lists showed that the first amendment on Section 20 of the old Act was defeated by 18 votes to 10, while the second division resulted in the amendment being defeated by 16 votes to 8. Those were the divisions that took place in regard to this very matter. The member for Ivanhoe had not been fair.

Mr. Scaddan: Too fair.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member when speaking at Mr. Dodd's meeting at Boulder said—

"It was not generally known that when the Bill was before the House the Minister for Mines was much more concerned about the interests of the mine owners than he was about the lives and limbs of the bread-winners. Under the Bill there was some doubt of the right to sue for damage sustained through breaches of the Act."

Where was the doubt? After the motion brought forward by the member for Murchison asking that these provisions should be put in the Bill which gave the right to sue, where was the doubt?

Mr. Scaddan: Read the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The statement by Mr. Scaddan at Boulder continued as follows:—

"Mr. Gregory, it was stated, asked the Crown Law Department if all doubt was removed, and the right to sue reserved to the Crown. The Crown Law Officers informed him that all doubt had been removed, and Mr. Gregory then cabled to the Mine Owners' Association in London to that effect."

Mr. Holman: When Mr. James moved the amendment to the Workers' Compensation Bill, he gave us to understand that an injured man could sue just the same under the Mines Regulation Act.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At that time he (Mr. Gregory) was controlling the department. He remembered Mr. James's speech and was under the impression it was pointed out that there would be no right to sue, as power had been given under the Workers' Compensation Act. The omission of Section 27

took away the right to sue. The member for Ivanhoe had stated that he (Mr. Gregory) had cabled to London with regard to the matter. When the Bill was going through the House a cable was sent to the Premier from the Mine Owners' Association complaining of certain legislation being put before the House. The Premier had asked him to draft a cablegram to the Mine Owners' Association and he had done so. The draft of that cable made no mention of any matter of the sort referred to by the hon. member. The draft of the Bill had been published, and in order to make it more particularly clear he had also published the draft of the precis sent to London to the Agent General, giving all particulars. The remarks the member made were grossly unfair. He, however, was quite clear of having done his duty in the matter. There was no equivocation in connection with the discussion on the Mines Regulation Bill as to the right to sue for damages. It was quite clear that under the Act there was no right to sue. If the hon. member read *Hansard* at page 2450 he would see that in the speech he (the Minister) then made he said, "There must not be given to the miners the right to sue for damages under the Mines Regulation Act." The hon. member in his remarks had not been just to him.

Mr. Scaddan: I believe it more earnestly now than ever.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Greenough (Mr. Nanson) made comparisons as to the cost of inspections here and in the Eastern States. Undoubtedly there must be a greater cost in a country like this where the mines were located so far away from each other, and one could not compare the cost of administration in Western Australia with that of any of the other States. He proposed to go into the matter of the inspection of machinery and inspection of mines with the Public Service Commissioner. There was one trouble he would like goldfields members to take special notice of. If the inspector of mines had also to act as inspector of machinery some notice of his visits

must be given to the mine managers. It was compulsory, if an inspector desired to examine the boilers in connection with a mining proposition, that he should give three, four or five days' notice to the mine owner so that the boilers might be prepared. Therefore at the same time he would give notice of an inspection of the mine. The only notice now given was in connection with the big mines, and the inspector telephoned them the night before the inspection. That was not done outside the big mines. The inspectors urged that the present practice should be continued, for there was not time in the one evening for the mine owners to alter dangerous places. By giving the notice the inspector was able to get on with his work at once. He would be quite satisfied, however, even to insist that that should not be done. Many details had been brought forward by members, and in most cases he would endeavour to get answers prepared and sent to the members who had brought forward the complaints. As to the ventilation of mines, regulations dealing with the question had been framed. Members opposite would, he was sure, approve of them. He was not now talking of coal mines and it was a pity the hon. member for Collie had not given him the instances referred to previously. Anyhow he would go into that matter. As to the ventilation of deep mines there were regulations which, if carried out, would provide great relief to the working miner. He was confident that as soon as we got into recess he would get the Leader of the Opposition to join forces with him with the view of having the fullest and most earnest examination into the condition of the big mines, and he would then find that he (the Minister) was as determined as he to see that the people working in the deep levels were given all those facilities provided for by the Mines Regulation Act. He again desired to thank members for the way in which they had generally received his Estimates and he hoped that, when dealing with the items, he would be able to give them the fullest information at his disposal on whatever matter might be brought up.

[This concluded the general debate on the Mines Estimates; items were discussed as follows]:—

Vote—*Mines Generally*, £45,727:

Item, Secretary for Mines and Inspector of Mining Surveys, £650:

Mr. HOLMAN: Referring to what had been said by the Minister as to the attitude taken up by Mr. James when dealing with the Workers' Compensation Bill, *Hansard* for the 3rd September, 1901, showed that Mr. James said—

“That is an absolute rule. Under the Mines Regulation Act where a great number of details are laid down, most of which details I should have thought ought to have been in the schedule, if an accident occurs by reason of the breach of or omission to observe any of those regulations an action will lie quite apart from Sections 20 or 27.”

The Minister for Mines: It was held that an action could not lie.

Mr. HOLMAN: Those words were used by Mr. James. It was for the reason that it was held an action could not lie that he had introduced the amendment. Our object was to try all we could to give a cause for action. As far as the officers in the department were concerned he had always been treated with courtesy by them, but others had informed him that they could not give the information he desired.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in continuing the general discussion.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was in connection with the first item, the under secretary, that he was dealing. The under secretary dealt with correspondence, and it was in connection with the Meekatharra railway, on a particular occasion, that he was refused some information which could have been given to him.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The under secretary should not be blamed, because if he (the Minister) was absent and it was an important matter that information was sought on, the under secretary might not care to give a reply. Often delays occurred, and sometimes they were regrettable. There had, how-

ever, been a practice growing up of hon. members going to the department and getting the recommendations of officers, even before such recommendations were seen by the Minister, and it happened that in this House members had known the contents of these recommendations before the Minister was aware of them. In connection with ordinary routine matter any head of a branch could supply a member with information; there was never any objection to that, but all matters of importance should be referred to the under secretary or the Minister. Members would surely see the justice of that.

Mr. TAYLOR: This item gave him an opportunity of making a complaint against the department. His complaint was that the letters of the Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association had not been answered by the department for some months. Speaking personally, he had invariably received prompt answers to his communications; he was aware that delays were at times unavoidable, but in connection with the Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association their complaint was different. For a long period they had not been able to get any replies.

The Minister: I can explain that to you.

Mr. TROY: The Minister had stated in connection with the Wilson and Moxon transaction, which he (Mr. Troy) had criticised, that there had been official neglect. It was his desire to know who the official was who was responsible for that neglect, because on going through the papers it was found that only two of the principal officers in the department were concerned, and therefore one or the other must be responsible. In the annals of the department there had not been such an act of gross maladministration, and if that was the method of doing business it showed very little business capacity.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member was outside the Chamber when I explained the matter.

Mr. TROY: The circumstances under which Mr. Wilson happened to get the grant from the department were known to him, and the two people responsible, he repeated, must be either the chief

clerk or the State Mining Engineer. If the Minister was responsible he should accept the blame; if the State Mining Engineer was responsible the blame should be put on his shoulders. The mere fact that the department was able to get rid of the machinery did not make the transaction any sweeter. He wanted the Minister to tell him definitely who the officer was.

The Minister for Mines : I have already made a full explanation.

Mr. TROY: The Minister then must take the blame.

The Minister for Mines : I am prepared to take it.

Mr. TROY was glad that the Minister had acknowledged his responsibility. He did not like to see any officer blamed for what he was not guilty of. He hoped now that the Minister would be as generous in dealing with the prospectors as he was in dealing with Mr. Wilson.

Mr. HOLMAN: Would the Minister inform him whether the guarantee of £100 to Mr. Quigley was returned?

The Minister for Mines : The whole amount would be paid in instalments with interest.

Mr. TROY: In respect to the question of information to be secured from the department, he himself had been met with the same answer as that given to the member for Murchison, namely, that no information must go from the department unless sanctioned by the Minister.

The Minister for Mines : Or the under secretary.

Mr. TROY: In connection with the officials of the Mines Department—particularly the under secretary, the chief clerk, and the registrar—he desired to say that he had always received from them the utmost courtesy and consideration. He had found, however, that since the last election one of the branches of the Mines Department declined to give any information at all to members. One would think the service was becoming a secret service, and that the servants themselves were there merely to hedge about the Minister with precautions. Under this system a member had to be always calling upon a Minister or writing to him,

and this, too, for information that was obtainable in the street.

The CHAIRMAN: The point was scarcely applicable to a general discussion.

Mr. TROY: Nevertheless it seemed hard that although representing a populous constituency he could not get simple information from the department.

The Minister for Mines : You can get it from the under secretary.

Item, Inspectors of Mines, £3,602:

Mr. SCADDAN: In the first place he desired to bring up this matter, not for any political glorification but out of consideration for the men employed in the mines. He wanted to take exception to some of the statements made by the Minister for Mines, who was altogether evading the charge which he (Mr. Scaddan) had made. In order that the Minister might be clear upon the point, it was perhaps desirable that the charge should be repeated. He (Mr. Scaddan) wanted to know by what means Subsection 2 of Section 62 of the Mines Regulation Act had come into that measure when it was introduced by Mr. Hastie.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was not in order in discussing under the Mines' Estimates what had happened in connection with the introduction of a certain measure. It was scarcely proper that such a question should have been referred to in the course of a general discussion on the Estimates, and he (the Chairman) would have stopped the Minister but for the fact that he had previously failed to stop the member for Ivanhoe. However, the question could not be dealt with in the course of considering the items.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Mines Regulation Act was entirely an administrative measure, and surely it was of moment to these Estimates. If, on the other hand, it was a dead letter—

The CHAIRMAN: The member was perfectly in order in discussing the administration of the department by the mining inspectors or by the Minister; but he was not in order in discussing the circumstances which had prevailed at the time the Mines Regulation Act was be-

fore Parliament, or what had happened at the drafting of that measure.

Mr. SCADDAN: It appeared to him that hon. members were continually doing this sort of thing. He had thought that he was taking the best opportunity of having the matter out with the Minister. It was a personal matter, for the Minister for Mines had been guilty and had practically pleaded guilty that very night. However, in accordance with the Chairman's ruling, he (Mr. Scaddan) would not pursue the matter further at that stage. What would please him best would be to thrash the matter out with the Minister for Mines on the public platform, before the men most concerned. In regard to the inspection of mines, the Minister had said that the reason why the inspectors of mines and of machinery had been separated was because under the Inspection of Machinery Act it was necessary for the inspectors to give notice of their intention of visiting mines for the purpose of inspecting the boilers; and in answer to a question the Minister had said that the inspectors in the Kalgoorlie field gave notice of their intention the night before. He (Mr. Scaddan) wanted to say that that practice was not restricted to the Kalgoorlie field. It applied to the Minister's district, and, indeed, generally.

The Minister for Mines: Can you prove that?

Mr. SCADDAN: All this he had heard in travelling about the country, and he was now telling it to the Minister. There was not one instance of it but many instances. When in Opposition the Minister had claimed that if the inspectors were not paying surprise visits it was in defiance of his instructions; and he had requested the then Minister for Mines (Mr. Hastie) to institute an enquiry into the matter. When the Minister was again in power the matter was once more brought under his notice, yet no action was taken about his instructions having been defied. The Minister could prove the present charge if he desired to do so.

The Minister for Mines: I have reports from these men, and they say they do not do so.

Mr. SCADDAN: The men working in the mines said the inspectors did it out-

side Kalgoorlie. They invariably did it in the Kalgoorlie field on the score that paying surprise visits would dislocate the working of the mines. If the Minister asked for a party of distinguished visitors to be shown down any mine at an hour's notice, provision could be made on any mine on the Golden Mile; but the inspector who had to see that the regulations provided for the miners' safety and health were being obeyed could not do so unless he gave a day's notice. The inspector should be able to go underground even without seeing the manager if he so desired. The effect of giving a day's notice was that it was possible for men working in dangerous places to be removed. It was done on the Kalgoorlie belt every day. Immediately the inspector left the mine, the men were put back in the dangerous places. Men's lives were being sacrificed because the Minister took up this attitude, and yet one was expected to be calm and to refrain from commenting because the Minister grew angry. He did not speak from any party or personal feeling, only in the interests of those employed in the mines. It was all very well to say that the men could go to the inspector and make complaints and that the inspector would get things put right.

The Minister for Mines: But they go to Mr. Dodd and get a report sent that way, and it is never known.

Mr. SCADDAN: If an inspector got information about a dangerous place in a mine, the men working in that place would immediately be dismissed. The manager would know that the men must have given the information. The Minister smiled at this. It was just the attitude the Minister took up, paying all his attention to winning gold irrespective of the sacrifice of lives among those working in the mines. The Minister was absolutely callous in regard to the welfare of the men. Sufficient evidence had been brought before Parliament to prove his (Mr. Scaddan's) statements, but now the Minister turned and smiled at the Attorney General. But the Attorney General knew that men had been killed through the Minister not seeing that the mines complied with the Act. The Attorney General acted for the Government of the day in

prosecuting the manager of the Boulder Deep Levels when Sergeant lost his life through not complying with the instructions of the inspector of mines. That life was valued at £30, and yet we were expected to be calm. So long as the Minister carried on in the fashion in which he had been administering the department in this particular direction, he (Mr. Scaddan) intended to raise his voice against it. The Minister at Menzies had eulogised him somewhat in connection with mining matters. He did not require the Minister's eulogy. If the Minister imagined that by eulogising him he was going to get him to detract from any statements made on the public platform, or to refrain from making any statements with reference to this matter, the Minister made a mistake. His (Mr. Scaddan's) political welfare was nothing to him in comparison with the welfare of the men working in the mines. He knew the risk to life and limb. Some of his own family, though not 40 years of age, had been compelled to cease work. He knew the gentleman referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, the gentleman admitted to the Coolgardie sanatorium. That gentleman was in good health a few years ago and was not yet 40 years of age. Yet the Minister calmly asked the Leader of the Opposition to see him during recess to see what could be done, saying that we had regulations second to none in the world. If that statement were correct, the Minister proved himself guilty out of his own mouth. These regulations were merely made for political purposes.

The Minister for Mines: That is worthy of you.

Mr. SCADDAN: If they were made prior to the general elections why were they not put into force? If it was necessary to frame these regulations before the general elections, it was necessary that they should be in force before the elections.

The Minister for Mines: They were in force in 1907.

Mr. SCADDAN: They are not in force to-day.

The Minister for Mines: They are in force.

Mr. SCADDAN: They were not.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member knows they are in force.

Mr. SCADDAN: They might be in force from the standpoint of being placed on the Table and having received the consent of the Governor-in-Council, but they were just as much in force as many of the sections of the Mines Regulation Act passed three years ago. They were a dead-letter only inserted for political purposes. Somebody was responsible for the number of accidents occurring in the mines and for the number of lives we were losing from the unhealthy conditions in which the men were working. It was no use the Minister saying he knew nothing of it, and that he would inquire during the recess. He (Mr. Scaddan) in his first speech pointed out that in a few years we would find that the mines in Western Australia would be worse than in any other part of Australia, not excluding Bendigo, which was known as the "death trap." In that speech he had issued a warning that unless the mining companies, when working shallow depths, were compelled to carry down winzes for ventilation purposes, the department would find it difficult to get the mines to do it when they reached greater depths. But the department took no notice of the warning, and now men working in these great depths were compelled to inhale stuff from the rock-drilling machines while earning a miserable pittance, and at 30 and 40 years of age were rendered unfit for further work. And the Minister callously said that during recess he might be able to see that the regulations were enforced. These remarks were made not to put them on record in the Press or in *Hansard*, but to compel the Minister to show he should have some sense of the responsibility his position carried. The Minister was not a Minister to erect State batteries for prospectors or to sign mining leases, but was a Minister to see that the welfare of the men employed in winning the gold for foreign companies reaping such huge dividends was properly considered as well as the wealth being won. It was not to be expected that under any Mining Act accidents would be absolutely abolished, but, at the same

time we could minimise the risk to which miners were subject by enforcing the regulations provided for that purpose. That should be the first concern, and yet one was blamed by the Minister for making statements with regard to his attitude on this matter. There had been absolute proof brought forward that the Minister was callous in this regard.

Mr. HOLMAN: Was the Minister going to alter the existing state of affairs in the Murchison as to inspectors? It was a country of vast areas and one inspector had to visit Peak Hill then go right back to Nannine, on to Meekatharra and then to Wiluna.

The Minister for Mines: The inspector does not go to Wiluna now. I have reduced the size of the district very considerably.

Mr. HOLMAN: Even outside of that the area was very extensive. Too great care could not be taken in connection with the inspection of mines. A return he had called for the year before last showed that the number of accidents in Western Australia was deplorable. It was regrettable that the Mines Department had not continued to keep such a record. At the present time only the more serious accidents were recorded and not the minor ones. It was advisable to have records of every accident that kept a man away from his work for more than three or four days. The return called for the year before last showed that there were nearly 100 accidents per month, and it was clear from the fact that the number had been reduced by one-half in the subsequent year that the records were not kept as completely in detail as they had been previously. It appeared that some action had been taken by the Minister or the heads of the department to prevent the recording of all accidents. Those who like himself had worked in the mines and had seen their mates killed alongside of them realised how necessary it was that the mine owners should be compelled to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of the men employed. It was not his desire to criticise the department or anyone else, but his great desire in this matter was to see that care was taken to preserve the lives and limbs

of the workers. It had been said in the old days of Bendigo that certain mine managers were responsible for a statement that men were cheaper than timber. Such a statement as that should not be allowed to be used with regard to the Western Australian mines. The criticism of the member for Greenough (Mr. Nanson) as to the inspectors was not a fair one. He had compared Western Australia with a State like Victoria where one could travel to any point in the State in one day. It was only reasonable that many more inspectors would be wanted here than in that State. Again as to New South Wales, the mining districts there were consolidated. Broken Hill had about 10,000 miners and Newcastle about 22,000 miners, and there were other large centres, but in each case the miners were concentrated in a comparatively small area. It was very different in Western Australia where in some cases one centre was 1,000 miles from another. It would be well if the Minister adopted the suggestion for a system of check inspectors to be introduced.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: None knew better than the member who had just spoken of the great difficulty of having a proper inspection of mines in a country such as this. Take for instance the Menzies district. There was Mt. Ida away to the north and in a small district like that we could not afford to have an inspector. Then there were Davylhurst and Carbine to the south and Kookynie and other districts in other directions. There was a large number of shows scattered throughout the huge electorate and it was impossible to have a mining inspector for each of them. The same remarks applied to all the mining districts with the exception of Kalgoorlie. Last year there was an extra inspector appointed for the Cue district, and the new man was made a resident of Lawlers, his duties being to inspect Black Range and other districts. Then there was the question of utilising the services of the inspectors of machinery to do the work of inspecting the mines. In that connection difficulty came up of giving notice to the mine managers. Where it was a case of the managers being notified of an inspec-

tion only the night before no trouble could ensue, for if a mine was in a bad state it could not be put right in a single night. But if the inspector of machinery had to inspect the mine also, notice of sometimes a week would have to be given so that the boilers would be ready for inspection when the inspector arrived. In that case if the two duties were combined the manager would know when the inspector would arrive and would have plenty of time to get ready for his visit. It was simply a matter of expenditure, and it was found that the Public Service Commissioner spoke strongly with regard to the large expense for inspection. Hon. members would see on account of the great distance of this country the impossibility of having that supervision which took place in districts like Bendigo, Ballarat, Broken Hill, and Newcastle. There it was possible to have cheaper and more complete inspection. He would see whether it was possible to get more inspectors; an inquiry was taking place to see whether it would be possible to secure the services of the machinery inspectors, more with a view of helping with the mining work.

Mr. Scaddan: Who do you propose to appoint on that board of inquiry?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It would consist of two engineers, one from the Works Department and one from the Railways Department.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th January, 1909.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—STATE BATTERY, YOUANME.

Mr. TROY asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has all the material for the Youanme battery been forwarded to that locality? 2, Who has been entrusted with the work of erecting the same? 3, Is it a fact that a start has not yet been made with the erection of the battery? 4, What is the reason for the delay? 5, When does the Minister anticipate the battery being available for crushing the prospectors' ore?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, Mr. D. Missingham is superintending the removal at present. 3, Yes. 4, There is no delay. The Youanme battery is portion of the old Black Range battery, and this could not be dismantled until the new Black Range battery was completed. Tenders had been called for a new battery frame, other parts renovated, and the work of removal to Youanme is now almost completed. When the various parts are on the ground the work of erection will proceed. 5, About the end of March.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SIDINGS, WIDGEMOOLTHA LINE

Mr. TAYLOR (for Mr. Horan) asked the Minister for Railways: Will he delay the granting of permission to Thomas Connolly for the construction of a siding on the Coolgardie-Widgemooltha Railway until receipt of a further report from Forest Ranger Kelso?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: The Railway Department has approved of the application.