

pine forest on University endowment lands south of Applecross. The Conservator of Forests, Mr. Kessell, is very enthusiastic about the project and has expressed the opinion that it will undoubtedly be successful. He, from his special training, should be better able than a layman to judge of the prospects. One point I raised with Mr. Kessell when he was advocating the joint project with the University was the danger from forest fires. Although it was a private conversation, I do not think Mr. Kessell would object to my repeating the opinion he expressed on that occasion that there was not much danger from forest fires. Recently, however, I was reading something about the forests in Canada, and I noticed that most elaborate precautions are adopted there to guard against forest fires. The forest areas are patrolled by aeroplanes and fire organisations are continually on the alert. I trust that Mr. Kessell was correct and that there will be no danger from forest fires, which undoubtedly are feared in other parts of the world. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. Ewing, debate adjourned.

BILL—RESERVES (No. 2).

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [6.3]: Before moving that the House do now adjourn, I wish to state that I do not feel justified in asking members to come back after dinner. On the Notice Paper appear the Albany Harbour Board Bill and the Roads Closure Bill, in both of which Mr. Burvill as well as other members are interested. In any case I had intended postponing consideration of these measures until the next sitting of the House. I had also intended to make only a brief speech in reply on the Shearers' Accommodation Act Amendment Bill, after which the House would have gone into Committee. That can well be done next week. The other measures that remain to be dealt with we are not yet prepared to submit to the House. If

we had sat after tea it would have been only for a brief while, consequently I have decided to adjourn. I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 11th November, 1926.

	PAGE
Bills: Adoption of Children Act Amendment, 1a ...	2120
Annual Estimates: Metropolitan Water Supply ...	2120
Other Hydraulic Undertakings ..	2181
Railways	2187

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

BILL—ADOPTION OF CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Mr. Sleeman, and read a first time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1926-27.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Vote—Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department, £141,481 (partly considered):

MR. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [4.37]: There are a few matters I desire to bring under the Minister's notice. It is pleasing, I am sure, to the residents of the metropolitan area to know that there is likely to be a sufficient supply of water during the forthcoming summer. We have been told that in previous years, but the expectation has not been realised. Still, with the advancement made in regard to reservoirs it is more

than likely that the restrictions to be applied next summer will be very few. Numerous complaints have been made regarding the quality of the water. Certainly in my district there is room for some complaints, but that appears to me to apply to only one or two streets. The reason should be easily traced by the engineers. Last night the Minister stated that the trouble was due to rust resulting from the corrosion of the pipes, the inrush of water at high pressure at times of flushing carrying the rust away. Largely, no doubt, that is the reason; but it has been brought to my attention that the discoloured water has a strong odour. Thus there must be some other cause besides the rust. I am bringing the matter under the Minister's notice so that he may in turn bring it under the notice of the committee appointed to ascertain whether the trouble is due to bore water. The bore water supplied at Subiaco has generally been considered even better than the hills' water.

The Minister for Works: There is no bore water at Subiaco.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Not at present, but I am speaking of what happened last summer, while the bore water was being sent through the pipes. The Subiaco bore water has always seemed to me of better quality even than the hills water. At times the greater part of the water supply of Subiaco would be drawn from bores. I have no complaint to make regarding that bore water. A strong odour does, however, prevail at times when the water is discoloured. Residents of the district affected have been struck by the fact that the discoloured water always happens to come through the pipes on a Sunday or a Monday. If the pipes are to be flushed at any time, it would be a simple matter to give notice to the residents of the district. This would only involve a small advertisement and a paragraph in the newspaper. In this way the complaints of the people, particularly in regard to dirty water on washing days, would be largely obviated. Monday is generally looked upon as washing day, and that day, somehow, happens to be the day when the water is most frequently discoloured.

The Minister for Works: It would be more noticeable on that day than on any other day.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I do not think that is the explanation. Probably the depart-

ment have been attempting to flush on Sundays.

Mr. Stubbs: The water has been discoloured in Subiaco all this week.

Mr. RICHARDSON: In certain parts of Subiaco the water becomes discoloured now and again. Year in year out, however, it is found that other parts of Subiaco remain free from discoloured water. Probably, therefore, the Minister is correct in his statement that in certain places the pipes have become corroded and that the flushing largely causes the discolouration. I sincerely hope the department will not find it necessary to impose any restrictions on the use of water during the coming summer. It is very hard indeed on suburban residents who have nice gardens to find themselves compelled through the restrictions, to let those gardens go to rack and ruin. I am sure, in any case, that the Minister will do his utmost to avoid the imposition of restrictions. While on the water question I again desire to bring under the Minister's notice that up to the present no water mains have been laid on the Daglish estate.

The Minister for Works: I have given attention to that matter.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I heard yesterday that the work was likely to be done promptly. May I urge the necessity for expediting it, because I know of from 20 to 25 young men who are desirous of becoming married and who have bought blocks on that estate. They cannot start building operations until the water mains are laid. A good deal of see-sawing has been going on between the department and the people requiring the water. The department, I understand, ask for a guarantee to cover all expenses—presumably interest and sinking fund. On the other hand, those who require the water cannot start building until it has been laid on. So the matter has been see-sawing during the last eight or nine months. I am indeed pleased that the Minister has now sanctioned the laying on of water to the estate. I assure him that it will prove a payable proposition. Many people are desirous of building on the estate, and I should not be surprised if in the course of 15 or 18 months it were found that all the blocks there have been built upon. In that case the department will have a revenue from water rates, and the railways will benefit by reason of the residents on the estate using the Daglish station. I thank the Minister for having put the matter through.

I have to point out that the southern portion of the Subiaco district suffers a good deal owing to want of drainage. The original proposal, I understand, was that when the sewerage works were started, deep drainage would proceed side by side with them. For some reason the department have held up deep drainage, and the Subiaco Municipal Council have consequently been involved in severe difficulties. The last Government had considerable trouble in connection with the Jolimont estate, where water lodged and eventually formed a lake. The last Government were involved in considerable expense on that account. In the absence of deep drainage which would drain Shenton Park, the Subiaco Municipal Council are being involved in a similar difficulty. Although an embankment over 5ft. high was built two years ago in the belief that it would last for all time, the water has overflowed the embankment and flooded private property. The council may find themselves mired in heavy cost at any time. So far as I can gather—and I speak as a layman—it is only a question of the Government making a drain from Shenton Park to the point at which the outflow to the ocean begins. The rest of the work, I was assured by the Minister last night, is already completed. The distance involved is about a mile. In that part of my district drainage has been created through road construction. Shenton Park is taking the drainage of just about one-half of the entire Subiaco district, and therefore acting as a sump for that half. Thus the problem is fairly serious. The park consists of 20 acres of land, and a drain would not only do away with a bad eyesore but would also remove a menace in the shape of a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The present position undoubtedly creates unhealthiness in the district. The council would be prepared to beautify the area and make it a better spot than Hyde Park is to-day. They are quite prepared to proceed with that work as soon as the drainage has been done. I wish to emphasise the seriousness of the question. The municipal council, in order to prevent some of the water from running into the lake, to which it must ultimately filter through, have had to buy numerous blocks of land at high prices and make sumps of them. Drainage is being turned into those sumps, which in many instances are situated between houses, and in that way the locality is rendered unhealthy. Moreover, the sumps become breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and

that is not in the best interests of the town. I hope the Minister will give this matter early consideration, for it is absolutely necessary both in the interests of that portion of the town and also in order that the municipality shall not be called upon to pay heavy costs. Last night the Minister referred to the sewerage work at Subiaco. I wish he could expedite that work, which has now been going on for three years. Here we are faced with the difficulty that we are using an obsolete system of sanitary arrangements. The town is very much congested. There is at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ square miles of it, practically all built upon, and still we have the obsolete pan system. If an epidemic were to break out it would have very serious results. To prevent that, the municipal council has been spending considerable sums of money for many years past. They have men on full time cleaning up, but that is not nearly so effective as the deep sewerage system would be. I understand it will be impossible to connect up this summer, but I do hope the work will be expedited so that in the following summer we shall have the greater part of the congested areas connected with the sewerage system. At first it was hoped the bulk of the work would be completed within three years. I do not know how long the Minister estimates it will be before we are able to connect up the major part of the town. If the septic tank were pushed on with, now that a portion of the sewerage system has been reticulated, we could soon begin connecting up and so remove some of the discontent caused by the present obsolete system. I do not desire to say any more, except to ask the Minister to expedite these works. More especially would I again draw his attention to the drainage from Shenton Park. It is the desire of the Subiaco Council immediately to widen Nicholson-road. It has been declared a main road, and the authorities are afraid to go on with this work because it will create more drainage into Shenton Park. We all know the necessity for widening Nicholson-road, and I hope that in the circumstances the Minister will be good enough to expedite these works so that they might be completed in the near future.

HON. W. J. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [4.48]: The hon. member who has just sat down, referring to the sewerage at Subiaco spoke of the houses being reticulated and connected up with the system.

The waste products from those houses will not go to the septic tank at Subiaco, but will be taken in the opposite direction. Until the tank is laid down, it would be foolish to attempt to do any household connections. When first I came to Perth the only system we had was a sort of hole in the ground. I bought a place in which to live, and took my own measures to secure satisfactory sanitation. The result was that when the colonial fever epidemic broke out our house was one of the very few that was free from it. Then the pan system came along and made a great difference to the epidemic, whilst the cleaning up of all rubbish in the district finished it. Health statistics in Perth have greatly improved since the installation of deep sewerage. It is essential that the system should be carried wherever practicable in the metropolitan area, for the health of the people is of greater importance than is the condition of the money bags. The hon. member spoke also of the discoloured water. Washing day used to be on Monday, and when I was associated with the old metropolitan water works it was arranged that flushing should be done every Friday night so as to give the pipes a chance to be clear before Monday morning. It is not altogether rust that discolours the water, for the reservoir water carries with it a certain amount of red soil brought down from the hills. When the time comes to put that water through the reticulation some of the soil must get into the pipes and, settling there, become hard. In the early days of the Perth water works, when I was manager, we made a torpedo scraper that we used to put through the mains to clear them out. Those who succeeded us, and also the present officers, are quite as much alive to the necessity for having clear water as we were. The big water schemes put in hand during my term as Minister for Works are still going on. I have no desire to criticise the way in which the work is being carried out, for I know how difficult it is for anyone not closely associated with the progress of the work to give a fair opinion as to the methods employed. In all such works the man in charge has to act as he finds things going. Of course there are always any number of people who know more than does the man in charge. All that I would say to the Minister is, "go on with your work, so long as you know you are doing the honest thing." The hon. member referred also to the extension of the pipe mains into districts sparsely

populated, and he alluded to the guarantee demanded. I can explain that: There may be a district in which there is no water, and perhaps some of the people there want the water. What the department has to do is to find out the probable revenue, and estimate the cost of the scheme; then, provided the margin is not very large, the department, or it was so in my time, invariably puts in the pipes. As to the guarantee, the population of Perth and the surrounding districts must increase, and so the guarantee becomes of no effect whatever. When I was Minister very little money was collected from guarantees, indeed very few people were asked for them. I did not think there was any necessity for it, because the growth of the city was so rapid as to render the guarantees unnecessary. When any big scheme is put in hand there is bound to be a lot of criticism, and a great many people growl about the rates they have to pay. Of course the water has to be supplied, and when it is supplied the rates must be paid. Even if they happen to be higher than was expected, the people have to pay. The metropolitan area could not exist if it were not for the country behind it. Those who carry on business in the city could not do so without their employees, and unless the employees have comfortable conditions, including an ample supply of water in their dwellings, they would not stay. So, as I say, the rates have to be paid, and either the extra amount is carried on or it has to come out of the profits already made. It is sheer humbug for ratepayers to be yelling and complaining about the rates, when a little commonsense would show them that the people must have good water, and if high rates are necessary they have to be paid, no matter where the money comes from. A little time ago a committee was appointed to inquire into the Perth water scheme. Those gentleman plumed themselves upon having made an excellent job of their inquiries. I regret very much that they did not find it within their province to call upon me to give evidence, for I should have been able to show them that a lot of the ground they covered was unnecessarily covered and that their conclusions were biased and in some instances even malicious. In their report the statement was made that the Engineer-in-Chief had never seen the plans of the water supply. The Minister for Works will know that on the file it is shown that the Engineer-in-Chief advised the Government, of which I was a member, to go on with the work, that

he had gone through the plans and specifications, that the estimates were reliable and that we could proceed. The Government put on the file a minute stating that they required a report by the Engineer-in-Chief. Consequently, the plans and estimates were sent up to him. He kept them a fortnight or three weeks, and then sent them to me with a silly minute. On the file will be found my minute in reply, to this effect, "This is of no use to me. I have no time to go into all the details. The Government require of you, as Engineer-in-Chief, a statement of the plans and estimates, so that we can put this work in hand." Yet the committee reported that the Engineer-in-Chief did not see the plans. It is true he did not see the plans of the filter bed, but that was not the fault either of the Minister or of the subordinate officers. If Mr. Lawson for some reason or other did not send the filter bed plans to the Engineer-in-Chief, he could not expect the Minister to be sitting on the doorstep and attending to them. The Minister for Works knows perfectly well that no one but the Engineer-in-Chief could do that part of the work. With regard to the main plans, we had Mr. Ritchie over from Victoria on two occasions, I think, and while the then Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Thompson, was in the Eastern States, he was communicated with, told to see Mr. Ritchie and go through the plans with him. All that may be found on the file. Yet in face of facts of that kind we have the committee's report, a lying, malicious report, brought in as if to throw the blame, I suppose, on me. That does not matter much; I do not regard people of that sort as being of any account. I value criticism only when it comes from men, whether in dungarees or broadcloth, who know what they are talking about, and whose opinions are worth listening to. Editors of newspapers and representatives of the Press may be very good in their own particular way, but when they attempt to set themselves up as judges and critics of practical work that demands the study of a lifetime, they are going a little beyond the education that their career has given them.

Hon. G. Taylor: Some of them are geniuses.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: Some of them are murderers. I know of two who are murderers, and I would have no hesitation in saying that publicly outside the House. One engineer not long since went to his death

as a result of newspaper criticism, and Mr. C. Y. O'Connor went to his death as a result of a lying Press. I should like to have the men responsible in my control for a while in order that I might deal with them. There was another matter so piffing that I should almost ask the pardon of the House for bringing it forward. A statement was made by an engineer—reference to this was contained in the committee's report—that he had spoken to me about the filter beds and had told me that the expenditure of a few pounds would have cleared up all the trouble. That is one of those half lies that are sometimes uttered. I do not think there is a quarter per cent. of truth in it. Mr. O'Connell, engineer for roads and bridges, was at one time engineer for waterworks at Fremantle. He is not only a well educated man, but a man of experience. Mr. O'Connell did not make any suggestion about the waterworks until after the filter beds had broken down. After they had broken down he came to see me on some other matter. It is all on the file. He asked me about the filter beds. The then Engineer-in-Chief and I had been down there that morning. I explained the whole thing and told him what the faults were and where the mistakes had been made. Then he said, "Why the necessity for filter beds?" I replied, "The engineers who have had to do with the work, Mr. Ritchie from Melbourne, Mr. Lawson and, I suppose, the Engineer-in-Chief, seem to think that filter beds are necessary to clear the bore water from the discolouration of which the people are complaining." Then he told me that he had had the same experience with the water at Fremantle and that a process could be adopted that would cost only a few pounds, and would overcome the trouble. The process is the same as that which was used in the early days in connection with our first waterworks. I told Mr. O'Connell that he had better see Mr. Lawson. I rang up Mr. Lawson and told him what Mr. O'Connell had said. I also rang up the Engineer-in-Chief and told him, and I issued a minute instructing Mr. O'Connell to go into the matter and, if he could help them, to do so. When he was asked by the chairman of the committee why he had not carried out the instruction, he replied, "It was not etiquette." I regret that I was not in a position to deal with a man who would defy the instructions of his Minister, and who had the cheek to put

up etiquette against the general good of the State. I could say a great deal on this question, but I do not intend to speak at length. When a big work is under construction and the Government and their officers are doing their best to carry it out, it would be distinctly unfair of me or any other member to indulge in destructive criticism of their methods, unless one had time to investigate the matter thoroughly. To do that would take days and even weeks, and as I have not the opportunity to do that, it would not be fitting for me to attempt in any shape or form and certainly not for political purposes, to throw mud at an affair, with the present working position of which I am insufficiently acquainted. The Perth waterworks have been designed to last for a number of years. The mains originally laid have been enlarged, because it was realised that for only a limited number of years will even the present scheme supply the rapidly expanding city of Perth. I had some experience of waterworks in the Old Country before I came to Australia. The scheme for the big city of Birmingham was considered by many people to be adequate for fifty years from the time of its construction, and in less than fifty years it has been necessary to instal two other schemes and Birmingham is now getting much of its water down from Cumberland in 4ft. 6in. or 5ft. pipes. Take the Melbourne water supply: I was engaged in driving tunnels for the third and fourth sections of that work at Healesville. At the time it was considered that the scheme would be sufficient to meet the requirements of Melbourne for the next fifty or sixty years or more without the necessity for undertaking any further work. What has been the experience? Ten or 15 years ago it was found necessary to build a very large wall, and instead of running the water in open channels, it has to be conveyed through pipes in order to obtain a full head and so force the requisite quantity of water into Melbourne. A few days ago I received a letter from people connected with the Melbourne water supply. I have known them for many years, and they have a little respect for me. They informed me that even now they are considering how they can augment the supply for Melbourne and the surrounding districts.

The Minister for Works: Melbourne has had restrictions in force throughout the year.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: Yes. Regarding the Perth water supply, I think the present Engineer-in-Chief stated that in future it would become necessary to draw on all the streams as far south as the river Murray. There is not the slightest doubt that that will have to be done. The city of Perth is growing, and I believe that in 25 years it will be able to vie with any of the cities on the other side of the continent. If this State had not been so silly as to join the Federation when it did, it to-day would have had a population in the metropolitan area of half or three-quarters of a million, because we would have been able to develop our State in a way that we have not been able to do, and I do not think ever will be able to develop it under Federation. All the conveniences such as water supply and sewerage are works that will have to be carried on, no matter what party may be in power. Those works are for the good of the people, and if it comes to a question of paying, the people will have to be educated up to paying for them. It will not be for the people of Perth, who pay the big rates, to say that they are going to circumscribe the conveniences necessary for the bulk of the population. They will have to dip into their money bags, pay up and be as cheerful as they can about it. I wish the Minister all possible good in carrying on the water scheme. It is not a political question; it is a question of the health and convenience of the people. If Australia is to be a nation and Western Australia a portion of it, we must do all we can to give our young people the advantage of growing up with a good water supply and proper conveniences, so that their bodies may not be weakened by diseases that the absence of such facilities would cause.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.12]: I should like to know what the department will do in the way of supervising the septic tanks to be provided in my district. I understand that a Bill to authorise the local bodies in the Claremont electorate to introduce septic tanks will be brought down this session. There may be some need for the department to regulate the use of such tanks or, failing that, it will have to be done by the Health Department. If it is necessary to have some hundreds of

septic tanks distributed amongst the 17,000 people of the district, there may be some failures. It has been suggested by some of the health officers of the local bodies interested that the Sewerage Department should supervise the erection, installation and use of the tanks. Of course, the system is not being installed with the idea that it will prevail for all time to the exclusion of deep drainage. We have not the audacity to go to the Government and demand that they should do for the Claremont district what they are doing for the Subiaco district. We feel that it would not be opportune to ask the Government to give immediately another half million pounds in order to provide deep drainage for Claremont, Cottesloe, Peppermint Grove and Cottesloe Beach.

Mr. Richardson: You want plenty of cheek.

Mr. NORTH: Another reason is that we do not desire to wait for three or five years before the first dwelling is connected. Under the scheme submitted to the department, which has received the concurrence of all the local bodies with the exception of Cottesloe Beach, the work of linking up the houses will be started almost as soon as the Bill has been passed. If, as is proposed, they link up ten or 12 houses per week, then long before three years will have elapsed, the whole district will be enjoying the benefit of a sewerage system which, though not so efficient as deep drainage, yet will be a distinct improvement on the pan system. No doubt precautions will be taken by the department to ensure that all the fittings are of uniform pattern and up to the standard required by them, so that in years to come when deep drainage is extended to the district, it will be only a matter of connecting up each house and scrapping the septic tanks. The cost of the septic tanks will be no more than £4 to £5 each, and that is the only loss that property owners should incur in changing over from the septic tank to the deep drainage system in the distant future. All the fittings, cisterns, pipes and leads-out installed under the septic tank system will be permanent assets. I understand that in Adelaide the local bodies have power to compel people to instal tanks. I hope the Sewerage Department will be favourable to the scheme we are proposing, will support it, and look after the details by arranging for inspections or the delegation of the authority to make them, so that from the

beginning the scheme will be a success. I think eventually the district will justify an extension of the deep sewerage scheme, and hope that in less than 20 years an efficient service will be installed in place of the present objectionable and obsolete pan system.

MR. J. MacCALLUM SMITH (North Perth) [5.16]: My electorate is concerned about water supply perhaps more than any other in the metropolitan area. I was rather surprised at the answer given by the Minister for Water Supply to a question I asked a few weeks ago. He said the department had received no complaints relative to the water at North Perth being unfit for consumption. If that is a sample of the information supplied by the department or the knowledge it possesses, I am sorry for the officials. If the officer who supplied that information to the Minister had been compelled to drink a quart of the North Perth water every morning he would have come to the conclusion that there was some ground for the complaints that have so frequently been made.

The Minister for Works: Not lately.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH: The trouble has gone on for years. The unfortunate ratepayers are tired of making complaints. The water has not improved, to my knowledge, for the last four or five years. The department seem to forget that they are under a moral obligation, if not a legal one, to supply the ratepayers with decent water. That seems to be ignored. Without a doubt the water has been unfit for consumption almost every day in the week. Not only this week, but last week and for months and for years the same trouble has existed. I know the Minister has a difficult task in front of him. First of all we were told that the trouble was due to bore water, and that as soon as we could get rid of that and were able to tap the hills supply, the water would greatly improve. We have tapped the hills supply, and also Mundaring, but there is no improvement. The explanation of the Minister is that the trouble is due to the accumulation of rust in the pipes, and that because of the extra pressure in the pipes we are now getting the benefit of the accumulation of years of rust. The ratepayers are prepared to put up with that for a little while, but I now ask the Minister if he cannot do something to give them relief. I would remind him that the rates have been raised from 1s. to 2s.

The Minister for Works: To 1s. 5d.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH: The assessments have also been raised. The ratepayers have been hard hit.

The Minister for Lands: The Government have nothing to do with the assessments. These are made by the municipality.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH: Unfortunately the ratepayers have to pay. Surely they are entitled to a reasonably pure water service. Seeing that the department are expected to give clean water, and the people are entitled to get it, it should be possible to do something in the way of reducing the rates. The Minister in reply to a question told me it was impossible under the Act to allow any rebate. I understand that his predecessor made certain rebates. If he could do that, surely the present Minister can do so.

The Minister for Lands: Who will pay the interest on the new works that are going on?

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH: That is for the Minister to settle. It is not fair to expect the individual who is not getting good water to go on paying these rates.

The Minister for Lands: At Collie the people have to pay 3s.

Mr. Sampson: And at Bridgetown.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH: The ratepayers have also suffered considerably because of the damage that has been done to their clothes by this rusty water. If it is impossible to allow a rebate on the rates, I suggest that the Minister might exempt the people from any charge for excess water. That is a reasonable request. Many ratepayers flush out their pipes in the hope of getting pure water. If excess water were not charged for it would show some consideration on the part of the Minister for the injustice under which the people are now suffering. I leave the matter in his hands, feeling sure that he will give it every consideration.

MR. MILLINGTON (Leederville) [5.22]: Representations have been made to me with regard to the increased water rates. The people of my district made it clear that they were prepared to pay provided they obtained an adequate water supply. They wanted a good supply, and were willing to pay an increased rate for it. It was understood at the time that an extension of the

hills scheme would lead to the expenditure of a great deal of loan money, and to an increase in the administrative costs. The ratepayers were so incensed because of the bore water they had to use, which was deleterious to their gardens, that it was not so much a question of cost with them as one of getting an improved supply. I have now received protests against the increased rates. In cases where the ratepayers are served with the sewerage system, and are living in an area that also receives storm water drainage, the rate is only 1s. 5d. In such districts the rate has not been materially increased. I used to pay £5 12s. 6d., but to-day my rates are only a little over £6. That is not a serious difference. My municipal rates have, however, been doubled. If people are given a service, they must pay for it. The people do not complain about the increase in the municipal rates, for they are receiving service in return. They do not complain if they are rated but do not get those things to which they are entitled. The main thing we have to concentrate on is an adequate metropolitan water supply. I agree with those who say we are entitled to receive good, clean water. It must be remembered that this matter has not been allowed to drift. I know that the necessary inquiries have been made, and the best possible advice has been obtained by the department. I do not know that an agitation would do any good, unless it were that the department were not taking any action. Experts say that there is great difficulty in obtaining a water supply as good as is desired, owing to various causes of a technical nature. If there had been carelessness and slackness on the part of the department, we would have some ground for complaint. If people are to get good water, they must pay for it. They are entitled to ask for a good and an adequate supply. We always have to pay pretty dearly for these things. With regard to the storm water rates, some districts were rated before they were brought within the ambit of the scheme. Complaints were made some time ago, and the rate was removed until the districts concerned were brought within the scheme. I believe that even now certain areas are taxed although they do not come within the scheme. I have referred the matter to the department, but have received no reply. These are genuine complaints. A storm water rate should not be imposed on any area that is not served

by the scheme. I presume that every district in the metropolitan area is anxious to have the sewerage system extended to it. Many requests have been made to me, and I have referred them to the department. A matter of this kind can only proceed gradually, for an enormous area remains to be covered. I could put up a good case for all the districts in my electorate. At the top end of Oxford-street, at Mt. Hawthorn, and in part of the North Perth district there is need for the extension.

Mr. Teesdale: We are not rushing it in our street.

Mr. MILLINGTON: These districts have been going ahead recently. Some of the older settled districts have not yet been provided with a sewerage system.

Mr. Teesdale: We do not want it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Many other people do want it, and are prepared to pay for it. We want the system extended with the utmost rapidity, but I understand the department cannot keep pace with all the demands. When claims for extensions are referred to me I will endeavour to get a fair deal for the people concerned. In one instance I was successful, namely in regard to the district around the Woodville Reserve, which has been brought within the area. I presume requests have come in from many other districts, but that it is impossible to keep pace with them all. As to the price charged for the water, I am prepared to stand up to it. I am satisfied, independent of any political influence, that all must realise the scheme has to pay for itself. I notice that the metropolitan water supply was responsible last year for a loss of £22,000. If the people want improved water supplies, and the users of the water do not pay sufficient to finance the scheme, the loss has to be borne by the general taxpayer. That is not the desire of the metropolitan people, and anyone should be prepared to tell them that if they are entitled to a good water supply, they are also entitled to pay for it. I am anxious to secure a good and adequate water supply, and I am satisfied that the people of the metropolitan area are prepared to pay a rate that will be adequate to finance the scheme. I want to see an extension of the sewerage system as early as possible, and I also hope that areas will not be rated for storm water purposes until they are brought within a storm water area that is being drained.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle—in reply) [5.32]: The Subiaco storm water drainage has been provided for in the outfall for the present sewerage works. The outfall has been constructed so that it can serve for both sewerage and storm water purposes, and that will safeguard against the necessity for double expenditure at some future time when storm water drainage is essential. I am satisfied, however, that the Subiaco people will not want any storm water drainage undertaking, particularly when they are given to understand that it will mean a rate of 6s. in the pound. That is what it will mean. As a matter of fact, we could buy both Jolimont and Shenton Park for less than one-half of the cost that would have to be incurred to drain the areas.

Mr. Richardson: That is so, but the areas must be drained.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But is that so? Must they be drained? In other parts of the world, where they have not the advantage of sheets of water such as we have at Jolimont and Shenton Park, large sums of money are spent in artificially creating such lakes. I do not know whether it would not be more advisable to beautify these sheets of water, than to spend on drainage works three times the money that would be sufficient to purchase the properties. I would not expect the Subiaco people to pay a stormwater rate of 6s. in the pound, and I am very sure they would decline to pay it. However, adequate provision has been made with the Subiaco outfall so that, in the event of the engineers discovering a cheap way of getting rid of the water, we will be able to handle the position.

Mr. Richardson: The greater the population becomes, and the more water that is delivered from the hills, the higher will be the level of the water in the lakes.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Only yesterday I received a report from the Engineer-in-Chief in reply to a request I made for records showing the increase of the water in the lakes during a number of years past. I found that the increase in the level of the water was infinitesimal.

Mr. Richardson: The increase in the water level since 1922 represents about three feet.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But I have perused the official records, and these certainly point to the fact that there is no immediate danger from the standpoint of flooding.

Mr. Richardson: That is entirely wrong, because floods were experienced there during last winter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The departmental officers are the only people who keep records, and no one can deny their figures.

Mr. Richardson: But there is evidence now of the flooding that took place during the winter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course there was any amount of flooding during last winter, due to the abnormal rainfall. I am not talking about exceptional rises in water levels during the winter, but of the normal increase in the water level of the two lakes I have referred to. The records I mentioned go back over many years.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is the water level not getting considerably lower in the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, it is getting considerably higher as the years go by.

Mr. Richardson: The water level of the lake in Shenton Park has risen 12 or 14 feet during the past 21 or 22 years, and the officials cannot deny that fact.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is not so, for I can remember playing football there some 20 years ago.

Mr. Richardson: That was nearer 30 years ago, for I played football with you then.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think so. However, the fact remains that the official records disclose that the increase in water levels is very small and if the Subiaco people were asked to pay a storm water rate approaching the figure I have mentioned, they would undoubtedly object. In fact, it would not be economical to incur such expenditure, amounting to three times what it would take to purchase the properties affected. Regarding the sewerage operations at Subiaco, the delay does not resolve itself into a matter of waiting for the tank. I could have had that work finished long ago but what is required is the ocean outfall. Although there have been requests to permit the effluent to run into the sea, I will not take any risks in that direction.

Mr. Richardson: And you are right there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know what it might mean to the Cottesloe district.

Mr. Richardson: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The effluent should be discharged out to sea. We would like to get some return for the money invested by connecting up many of the houses in the district served. The work of reticulation could go on in the winter months, but we could not work on the outlet in the sea during that period. It was necessary to wait for the gales to pass, and it is only recently that we have been able to recommence the work. The men employed on it will be kept at work for as long hours as possible, so as to get it completed. At the same time I will not take any risks whatever in allowing the sewerage to pass through the pipes until the outlet is constructed well out to sea.

Mr. Richardson: Quite right, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As to the septic tanks in the Cottesloe area, that position has been carefully considered and I hope shortly that those concerned will regard the upshot as satisfactory. Again, some comment has been made regarding the discolouration of water supplied in the metropolitan area. This morning I had a conference with the Engineer-in-Chief, the engineer in charge of the Metropolitan Water Supply, Dr. Simpson, the Government Analyst, Dr. Atkinson, the Principal Medical Officer, and Mr. Haywood, the Under Secretary of the Department. We sat for a couple of hours discussing the whole situation, and I can assure hon. members and the people generally that the best expert advice the Government can get, and the best expert officers we have, are giving attention to the problem. The whole question was considered, and everything that can be done to remedy the nuisance will be done. The officers are just as anxious as the people themselves to assure to Perth a good pure water service. They are anxious and willing to do everything possible to secure that end. The reason that the Mt. Lawley district seems to be getting the worst of the deal is—

Hon. G. Taylor: That they are not so democratic as people in other parts and do not deserve better treatment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The explanation is that, particularly now when Mundaring water is available to city consumers, that water flows through as far as Mt. Hawthorn during the night time, and during the day time the Mt. Lawley area is largely fed from Mt. Hawthorn because

the pressure from Mundaring does not enable the water to get right through. The pull-off at Guildford, Midland Junction, Bassendean, and Bayswater is so great that the Mundaring water cannot reach the city. Thus, at Mt. Lawley there is a two-way flow, from Mundaring by night and from Mt. Hawthorn by day. That means that the pipes are being continually flushed.

Hon. G. Taylor: And that is the reason why we get the discolouration at Leederville sometimes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, the effect is to continually remove the rust from the pipes. It was suggested that better things had been expected when the hills water was supplied to the city. I made an explanation before and what I said was emphasised this morning at the conference with the officials. It is that the hills water contains a great deal more oxygen than does bore water. The hills water rushes down brooks and creeks, in cascades over rocks and through eddies. The result is that there are air bubbles throughout the water, and that water flows into the pipes. The presence of the oxygen in the air bubbles has the effect of promoting rust in the pipes and the rust becomes precipitated. Thus it is that, during this part of the year particularly, more rust is apparent in the water from the hills than in that drawn from some of the bores. The discussion this morning included the consideration of how best the existing difficulty could be overcome. The experts have been giving this problem consideration for two or three months past and a number of proposals have been put forward. It appears to me that there is only one way of securing a permanent solution. Until such time as the big reservoirs in the hills are completed and we can store water there and not draw off from the creeks, we shall get water that is aerated. If the reservoirs were completed, we would draw the water from the bottom of those catchments and there would not be so much oxygen in the supplies drawn off. Until that position is reached, the only way to overcome the difficulty is by lining the pipes. That has been done in many parts of the world by means of concrete or bitumen. I have asked the engineers to go into that question and see whether we can recommend that policy in connection with all future extensions and renewals. It is estimated roughly that the lining of the pipes will add 7 per cent. to the cost of the pipes.

Mr. Richardson: Then it would be worth while doing it.

Hon. G. Taylor: Will it increase the life of the pipes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: Then that is sufficient compensation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have asked for a report from the officers, but at any rate that is one method we could adopt. Of course, if we were to consider treating the whole of the pipes already laid down, it would represent an enormous outlay. The people could not possibly finance that undertaking, nor could the Government find the money for it. Another method that has been considered is de-aeration. That has been practised at Mundaring in connection with the Goldfields Water Supply, but whether that should operate at the source of supply, or at the service reservoirs, is a point that the engineers are going into. I believe that if a de-aeration plant were established at the source of supply, and the water fed directly into the pipes with very little use made of the service reservoirs during the peak seasons, much of our present troubles would be overcome. No doubt it is owing to the oxygen in the water that so much of the rust trouble is caused. I have been assured, and I have not the least doubt, that the water in the streams is absolutely first class. The trouble is in the pipes and not at the source of supply. Discolouration is caused by rust in the pipes. Dr. Atkinson is emphatic in his statement that rust is not injurious to health. If a bucket is filled with discoloured water and allowed to stand for half an hour, the rust will settle and leave a beautifully clear fluid. Dr. Atkinson has in his office bottles containing discoloured water. He shakes these and afterwards the sediment can be seen to settle in a few minutes. Of course he does not recommend that this water should be given to infants, but the difficulty can easily be overcome by drawing off a bucketful and allowing it to settle. The trouble mainly is in the morning. Our advice is that towards the evening the water becomes very clear. This time last year we had a little trouble, but it was not so bad as it is this year.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Or the year before last.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is referring to the period when we were drawing water from the bores. Last year we had little trouble with hills water, but that can be easily understood when we

realise the fluctuation in the consumption. Our minimum demand is 3,000,000 gallons a day and the maximum 18,000,000 gallons a day. At this period of the year the movement in the pipes is so sluggish that the water is stationary for many hours in the night. There is no water to speak of drawn from the service reservoirs, and as the water remains in the pipes so there is created rust, and then with perhaps a suddenly increased demand and the rapid flow, the rust is carried along. Instructions have been issued by the department that there is to be no flushing of pipes done on a Monday, which is recognised as washing day. We are letting the water at Churchman's run to waste now. The pressure is all right; it is the discolouration that is causing trouble. I can only repeat that the matter has had the careful consideration of the officers and myself. Everyone is anxious to give the people the best possible supply. We intend to continue to do that and I hope that the people will recognise that that is being done. I believe there will be a substantial improvement within the next month or two and I think we shall be able to get through next summer without difficulty. The water itself is a distinct improvement on that which we were getting from the bores.

Mr. Richardson: Bore water, it is contended by experts, is the best water of all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: All experts declare that the harder the water the more unpalatable it is to drink and also the less likelihood there is of its becoming discoloured. There is less discolouration in the water from Mundaring because there is a considerable amount of salt in it. The water from Wongong and Churchman's contains more salt. Of course we could turn on the bore water and get over the discolouration, but that water is not so palatable as the water from the hills. We are giving the subject the strictest attention and the member for North Perth can rest assured that the best advice it is possible to get has been obtained. Our experts in the service are giving the matter the closest attention.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — Other hydraulic undertakings chargeable to revenue, £26,735:

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister—Kalgoorlie) [5.52]: I desire to offer a few remarks in connection with the activities of this branch of the department. We have completed a reservoir at Bruce

Rock, the storage capacity of which is 4,200,000 gallons. This reservoir will be served by a rock catchment of 33 acres. In addition a service reservoir of a capacity of 800,000 gallons has been constructed on the top of the rock. The Government, realising the urgent need of an adequate water supply for the residents of Bruce Rock, lost no time in making the necessary provision. Extensive field work has been carried out during this year, as in the previous year, for the purpose of locating catchments and securing holding ground in the agricultural areas with a view to conserving water. The Chief Engineer for agricultural water supplies has prepared plans for the purpose of providing supplies in various districts. Dams have been completed in the Dalwallinu, Galena, Gabbin, Kalgarrin, Pingrup, Esperance and Wilgoyne districts and an additional tank has been provided at Yandanooka. Recently we completed a tank in the new mining district of Glenelg Hills. We were fortunate in securing a rock catchment in close proximity to where mining operations are being carried on and as a result a 5,000,000 gallon tank has been provided. We have not overlooked the requirements of our stock routes. The Nullagine-Leonora stock route has received attention during the past six months and we propose to provide at least seven additional wells. When that stock route was first opened up and water supplies made available, it was mostly cattle that were driven along there, but within the last two or three years the country has been stocked to a considerable extent with sheep, and it has been found necessary in many instances to reduce the distances between the water supplies by providing an additional well. We hope in the near future to be able to properly safeguard the interests of those people who recently have invested big sums of money in the pastoral industry in those areas. In addition, we have improved many tanks that have been in existence for a number of years. It is well known that many years ago large sums of money were expended in connection with providing tanks in our agricultural areas and also in the different centres throughout the back country. It was found that some of the tanks were of poor holding capacity on account of the soil being porous. That necessitated the lining of the tanks with concrete, and that has been done in a number of instances. At the present time survey parties are busily engaged in the Norseman and Esper-

ance districts. It is well known that there is a large and valuable tract of agricultural country in close proximity to what is known as Salmon Gums. That land has been surveyed and will in the near future, be thrown open for selection and it has been deemed possible to provide an adequate water supply for the new settlers. The survey parties have been successful in locating catchments of good holding ground and the operations are well in hand in connection with the excavation of tanks. In all there will be nine tanks provided and the settlers will be in the position to develop their holdings more easily than if they were forced to cart water over a distance of some miles. Altogether, up to the immediate present, a sum of £30,000 has been earmarked for water supplies in that area. In addition the Government have realised the needs of the agricultural areas throughout the wheat belt. Plans have been prepared and sites have been selected for the purpose of providing what we term district water supplies. The first will be in the Narembeen district, where it is proposed to construct a storage reservoir of a capacity of 20,000,000 gallons. We have been fortunate also in securing a good rock catchment at a place called Waddouring, about seven miles north of Narembeen. It is estimated that an area of 120,000 acres can be served from that reservoir. In the Wilgoyne district we have provided a rock catchment reservoir of a capacity of 6,250,000 gallons, and extensions have been put out in three directions. There are 37 settlers in the district, and they requisitioned the department for a water supply to carry them over the summer months. They agreed to be rated on the following basis: those in close proximity at £10 per 1,000 acres, and those a little further removed at £12 per 1,000 acres, per annum. The rating is for the purpose of meeting the annual charges on the capital expenditure involved in these extensions. As regards payment of rates, the Water Supply Department have very little trouble with settlers when the half-yearly accounts are sent out, though in some cases repeated applications are necessary. The Narembeen scheme will cost about £78,000. Before proceeding to expend this money we must conform to the provisions of the Water Boards Act of 1904, as amended last year; that is to say, at least two-thirds of the settlers, representing not less than 50 per cent. of the land held, must petition for a supply before the work is put in hand.

Petitions are now being circulated, and I am confident that the settlers will be only too pleased to avail themselves of the opportunity which is offered. The rate will work out at about 8d. per acre. For the first three years of the life of such a work the settlers are not called upon to pay towards the annual cost of the head works. By head works I mean the basin container around the rock, the storage reservoir, and the service reservoir on top of the rock. Provision is made to grant a measure of relief with a view to enabling settlers to stock their holdings and, if necessary, fence against both rabbits and dingoes. The Government realise that in connection with water supplies it is essential to afford the settlers every opportunity of making good and utilising their holdings to the best advantage.

Mr. Sampson: What is the charge per 1,000 gallons?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: For the moment I do not remember the exact figure, but I think it works out at about 6s. per 1,000 gallons. In the Kondinin district the Government have also provided a water supply for the town and for the Railway Department. It is proposed later to extend the service to the settlers about the Kondinin area. The same conditions will apply as those I have mentioned in connection with Narembeen. Then there is a large area of splendid country north of Trayning to be served. Plans have been prepared for the construction of a water supply there, and it is expected that 480,000 acres will be reticulated. The area of rock at Waddouring is 270 acres, and the engineers are confident that an adequate supply can be provided. A reservoir of 22,000,000 gallons capacity is proposed, and I believe that capacity can be increased to 35,000,000 gallons. The matter is now receiving the attention of the Chief Engineer for Agricultural Water Supplies. The water stored in that reservoir will be pumped to the top of the rock, and thence it will gravitate to the surrounding farms and towns. This rock catchment is one of three which will be brought into use in connection with the scheme. At Narraharin it is proposed to impound 40,000,000 gallons, and at Kunneagen we intend to instal a bore tank with a capacity of 7,500,000 gallons. For these water supplies the settlers are called upon to make requisitions. It is not the Government's policy to force upon settlers a water supply

against their will, but the experience of years gone by is such as to make it certain that the petitions now being circulated will show a substantial majority of the settlers in favour of the proposals. The money needed for providing the water supplies will be obtained under the migration agreement. The schemes have already been approved by our Minister for Migration and by the Commonwealth Government. They have also been approved by the representative of the Imperial Government, Mr. Banks Amery, during his visit to this State and in conference with the Federal authorities in Melbourne. The Federal Migration Commission, as part of their work, are now examining these proposals for water supply, which I am confident will receive the Commission's approval. In addition to the propositions I have mentioned, the Government will continue the very necessary work of investigation with a view to water supplies throughout the agricultural areas. In the first place sites have to be selected. Often it is possible to find a really good site from the aspect of earth catchment, but it turns out that there is only a shallow depth of good holding ground. The selection of sites and testing of holding grounds involves considerable expenditure. However, the work is going on. As Minister in charge of agricultural water supplies I realise that it is hopeless to expect pioneer settlers to succeed unless water is provided for them. On almost every one of my brief visits to the agricultural areas I have noticed an abundance of good fodder going to waste because of want of stock. In many cases the fodder has involved the farmer in additional cost. Our farmers realise that in order to farm successfully they must carry sheep. The provision of adequate water supplies will therefore mean the enhancement of the profit-earning capacity of the holdings. In addition, it will prevent the necessity for turning back into the soil large quantities of fodder, which should be fed to sheep. Thus the incomes of the settlers will be increased, and there will be greater returns for the Railway Department and the Treasury. As the Minister for Railways has pointed out, it is well known that mixed farming means considerable improvement of the soil under cultivation by reason of stock being held. Now I wish to refer to the activities in land drainage. Owing to erosion of the banks of the Harvey River,

a new channel has had to be cut for the Harvey irrigation scheme at a cost of £1,000. This was an essential work, and had to be done expeditiously, and the Government lost no time in putting it in hand. Extensive drainage works have also been carried out in the Busselton district, especially for the group settlements. The total expenditure involved is £239,000. Since the land has been cleared for group settlement purposes, it has been found necessary to do a large amount of drainage. The work has been started, and in the near future the number of men employed will be increased considerably. In addition, money has been made available to the Engineer-in-Chief for the necessary investigation work between the Peel Estate and Bunbury with a view to drainage. The work must extend over a number of years; no Government could accomplish it within three years.

Hon. W. J. George: A good deal of surveying was done there in the past.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, and valuable information was collected. The activities of the previous Minister, however, were curtailed by the limited amount of money at his disposal.

Hon. W. J. George: By the empty pocket.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: That controls most of us at times.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Prior to the tea adjournment I was referring to the activities of the Drainage Department concerning important works that have been taken in hand in the group areas. That work will involve an expenditure of £239,000 in the Busselton district. In addition to that there are other important districts in the South-West in which large sums of money will be expended in providing a drainage system. We know that many of the holdings that were improved years ago have suffered because of the large flow of extra water that followed upon the clearing operations in higher parts of the watersheds. It is necessary to carry out drainage works not only to draw off the water from the newly cleared areas, but to cope with the extra flow on the older settled parts. The money necessary to carry out these huge undertakings will be provided from the migration grant. I have much pleasure in submitting the vote to the favourable consideration of the Committee.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [7.32]: During the course of his references to country water supplies, and the establishment of district schemes in various agricultural centres, the Minister referred to the scheme in the Wilgoyne district which is in my electorate. A water scheme has been provided there from a rock catchment. The Minister's reference to the charge of £10 per thousand acres may be regarded as peculiar in comparison with charges levied elsewhere. The Wilgoyne water supply is not laid on to the farms but runs along the sides of the roads to tanks from which the farmers cart the water. The scheme has been in operation for some time and the settlers have told me that it would not have been possible for them to stay in the district had that supply not been provided. The Minister also dealt with the No. 1 water scheme, which is also in my district, and referred to the referendum. The people there have been clamouring for years for a district water supply. It is rather unfortunate that the scheme has been brought to finality at an inauspicious time. That arises from the fact that we have had a very wet winter and most of the farmers have plenty of water, but, I may add, short memories as well. The referendum has been taken, but the result is not yet known. I feel convinced, however, that a majority of the residents will sign up and that the necessary two-thirds will be secured. The road board conducted the referendum and it has taken much longer than I anticipated. I understand it will be completed shortly. I regret that one consideration was overlooked in connection with the referendum. A number of small country towns will be served, but the people there are not included in the referendum, notwithstanding they will have to pay water rates when the pipes are laid. The refusal to allow those people to have a vote was a mistake. In my opinion had they been allowed to participate, it would have assisted in reaching finality and the majority would have been much more pronounced. For many years I have been asking for the provision of water supplies in the country areas, and, in common with the Minister, I believe the people will be foolish if they turn down the proposal. I have advised them to vote in favour of it. Some doubt arose because of the position of some settlers who have more land than they can work at present. A considerable proportion of their land is unimproved and as

they will have to pay rates on unimproved values, they are the people who are not so anxious to get the water scheme. Generally speaking, the men owning fair sized blocks keenly desire the water supplies. The Minister referred to the charges on the head works. I thank the Minister for securing the approval of Cabinet for the reduction of these charges. It always seemed to me that that course should be adopted. Other portions of the Estimates disclose the fact that the Goldfields Water Scheme has never paid interest and sinking fund charges. The Minister also said that the extensions had not paid for head works or for pipe lines either. In these circumstances, the people in the agricultural areas should have some redress, thereby making the scheme more practicable and economical. I compliment the Minister on his work. He has paid several visits to my district and has displayed considerable energy and enthusiasm in bringing these matters to finality.

HON. W. J. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [7.36]: We are all interested in country water supplies, and were pleased to hear the statement by the Minister. My reason for rising is to ask him to tell us, when he replies to the debate, what is proposed about irrigation works. The South-West is particularly well adapted by nature for irrigation schemes. The initial one in Western Australia was at Harvey. It was intended to provide water during the summer months for large areas then under citrus fruits. Unfortunately many of the orchards did not prove as successful as we could have desired, and a number of them have been turned into fodder production plots in connection with the dairying industry. The results that have followed are such as to lend encouragement to the proposal that, when funds permit, an extension of the work may be undertaken in a number of centres in the vicinity of the Darling Ranges, extending from Beenup to Roelands and other districts to the south as well. There are numerous quarters from which issue streams that, if confined and stored up by means of weirs enabling the water to be conducted to the plains, would prove of advantage to many districts and to the State as a whole. I believe I am not exaggerating when I say that the areas I refer to will constitute in the future not only the big dairying district of Western Australia, but of the Commonwealth. We are encour-

aged to bring these questions forward because during the last 12 months or so the dairying industry has received such support by the provision of means enabling milk to be sold at reasonable prices, that it has transformed the financial position of many settlers. In the past they may have been discouraged because of various disabilities, but with the establishment of a milk company at Harvey and of butter and cheese factories, a wonderful change in the standing of the settlers has been wrought. Had it not been for the fact that they were able to get water in the summer time when they needed it most in order to provide the necessary fodder crops, they would not have been able to do what stands to their credit today. I take this opportunity of mentioning this question to the Minister in the hope that he may tell us of the probability of an extension of the undertakings being authorised in the near future. I thank the Minister for the courteous attention he has given to the various requests I have had to make to him in connection with water supplies. There are some other matters I would have mentioned to-night, but as I will have an opportunity of discussing them with him next week, I will not refer to them this evening. During the tea adjournment Mr. Kirwan, M.L.C., showed me a telegram he had received from Narembeen. The communication which was from a number of prospectors at Glenelg Hills, stated that the water question was serious, and it requested him to urge the Government to expedite assistance. I mention that matter in case Mr. Kirwan has not been able to see the Minister. I desire to impress upon the Government the importance of the question of irrigation, for if only money can be provided to carry out various schemes, the South-West presents a wonderful field of opportunity. That will be disclosed not only in the products that may be grown as the result of the irrigation schemes, but it will remove from the State the stigma that the Leader of the Opposition has referred to so often, of having to import large quantities of dairy products from the Eastern States.

The Minister for Lands : The greatest difficulty I experienced in connection with the activities under my control is to get the water away from the holdings.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE : There are many works that can be undertaken. In the South-West there are areas that are water-logged,

and if an adequate system of drainage were to be provided in the South-West, it would probably be possible to have 100,000 successful settlers operating between Fremantle and Bunbury. There is no mistake regarding the quality of the land, but the trouble is to get the water away during the winter months. During the summer period there is not so much trouble from the drainage standpoint, because the water is required to permit of the cultivation of crops.

The Minister for Lands : But they cannot sow the crops in winter because the land is flooded.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE : The Minister for Lands will have his joke.

The Minister for Lands : But that is a fact.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE : The water there gets away before the summer, and it generally finds a place where it is useless for irrigation purposes. I want to see irrigation schemes started so that the land between the foothills and the plains may be brought into a state of production.

Mr. Griffiths : There are 17 schemes outlined and surveyed by the department between Bunbury and Perth.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE : That is all right; I am not grumbling. I am bringing the matter forward so that it may not be lost sight of, and that possibly if the expectations of the Premier are realised, and we have a large surplus, the Government may be able to spare a few hundred thousand pounds in order to operate a series of irrigation schemes. The Minister for Works realises the position because of his experience in connection with his own holding. He knows that we have streams meandering down the Darling Ranges, and if that water could be kept there and distributed during the summer months, it would make all the difference between the success and non-success of many farmers, the success of whom will mean that Western Australian enterprise will be enlarged and its scope widened.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [7.45] : In my electorate two or three schemes have been inaugurated but are not yet in working order. The scheme near Kondinin will be a wonderful help. In the past the people there had to get their water by railway and carry it a considerable distance, paying up to 2s. 6d. per 100 gallons for delivery. When the scheme is completed the cost of the water will be very much less. Still we have to consider how the money is to be raised for

the carrying out of this and similar schemes. A good many of the old settlers are already complaining of the probable cost. I think they are wrong in doing that, for the scheme will have the effect of greatly enhancing the value of the land, and so the settlers will be far more than recompensed for their rates. Then there is the Gorge Rock scheme, to impound many millions of gallons. However, to make that scheme pay, the Government will have to rate the whole of the surrounding district. As the result of the wet season we have had, the settlers have made their own provision for water and probably they have enough to last them for the next 12 months. Still in another year, when not so much rain falls, they will be crying out for water again. The Government are to be commended on putting in these district schemes, resulting in a good supply of water in dry areas. In the past the settlers have had to cart their water over considerable distances, whereas when the schemes are completed all that the settlers will have to do will be to turn on a tap. The charges, I understand, will average from 7d. to 10d. per acre, which cannot be regarded as excessive. I am pleased to know that so much money has been expended in my electorate, and I am sure all the farmers will reap considerable benefit from the schemes.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.50]: In the 110 miles between Perth and Bunbury some 17 irrigation schemes have been outlined and surveyed. These, it is calculated will serve to irrigate an aggregate area of 150,000 acres. A request I wish to again put up to the Minister is that he should erect floodgates on the Avon river with a view to shutting out the water flowing in from the salt lakes. The cost should not exceed £50. That salt water comes into the river just at the time when it can do the most damage. In watching the Estimates year after year I have noticed that various schemes outlined in the past are gradually coming into operation. Evidently the expert officers in the various departments have an eye to the future. This is very noticeable when one hears, as we did to-night, from the Minister that they are looking so far ahead as to think of tapping, with a view to the future supply of the city, some of the rivers surveyed for irrigation purposes. We are happy in having a staff capable of exercising vision and foresight. Even in the Railway Department, I understand, the officers are beginning to prepare for the

transport of wheat up to 20 years ahead. I do hope the Minister will take into consideration that proposed small expenditure on the Avon River. He may say he never hears anything of it from other people. The fact is the trouble has continued for so long that the people are becoming tired of singing out about it. That experiment would be of very great service and probably would materially improve the upper reaches of the river.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [7.53]: There is in the Estimates provision for the expenditure of £2,000 on stock routes. I should like to know whether the Minister can tell us where it is to be expended, and whether anything has been set apart for the Ninety-Mile Beach and that section of the stock route.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister—Kalgoorlie—in reply) [7.54:]: Let me assure the member for Murray-Wellington (Hon. W. J. George) that the subject of irrigation is under consideration. At present we have but one irrigation scheme in operation, namely, the scheme at Harvey. Still, considerable data has been collected in respect of proposed irrigation works. Since Mr. Stileman has been in the State a good deal of attention has been given to the possibilities of irrigation in the South-West. As to the scarcity of water at Glenelg Hills, the question was brought under my notice by Mr. Corboy, the member for the district, and by local people who have visited the city recently. It is receiving attention. The Minister for Mines has arranged to provide out of the Mines Development Vote a sum that will enable water to be supplied to the prospectors on that field. It is not the function of the Water Supply Department to buy water, cart it and give it away to consumers. We are providing at Glenelg Hills a new tank of a capacity of 500,000 gallons, and in addition, a squatters' tank. But it is for the people themselves, or, alternatively, for the Minister for Mines, to bear the cost of supplying water to the prospectors. However, as I say, the question has received attention and satisfactory arrangements have been made. I can assure the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) that the proposed district supply at Gorge Rock has not been overlooked. The storage reservoir will be formed by a granite concrete wall, with a maximum height of 22ft., across a natural depression in the rock, to impound

3,000,000 gallons. The water will gravitate from the reservoir to the surrounding farms and will serve 25,000 acres, or approximately 25 farms. In each of these district water supply schemes there is an area declared as the district water supply area, and the water will gravitate over that area. At Naremben the area to be served by gravitation will be 112,000 acres. The people within those district areas will be called upon to meet the annual charges, including sinking fund, interest and maintenance. We have been rather fortunate this season in getting a wet winter, with the result that on most of the farms there is an abundance of water conserved. But the settlers have learned by experience that it is wise, whenever possible, to provide insurance against drought conditions. My advice to the settlers within these district water scheme areas is to seize the opportunity now offering, for if that opportunity be lost it may be some years before it is again on offer. As to the rate to be charged, it must be sufficient to meet the annual charges, less the capital cost of the head works, over a period of three years. As to the Gorge Rock scheme, if we eliminate the capital cost of the head works, the rate should not be more than 6d. per acre. After all, these works must first be completed before we can know the actual cost. When that cost is ascertained the rate will be declared accordingly. We have estimates, of course, and I am confident those estimates will not be exceeded, for in all these estimates the engineers provide for what, in their opinion, will be the maximum amount necessary. Regarding the suggestions made at various times by the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths), I recently despatched an engineer to Beverley to investigate the flow of water from the salt lakes that adds so greatly to the salinity of the water in the Avon Valley. I expect to receive his report in a few days. I mention this to assure the hon. member that the matter which has caused him so much concern for several years has not been entirely overlooked.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Perth City Markets, £916—agreed to.

Department of Railways, Tramways and Electricity Supply (Hon. J. C. Willcock, Minister).

Vote—Railways, £2,730,000:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [8.2]: I do not intend to occupy much time in introducing these Estimates. The estimated amount of railway revenue for the current year is £3,650,000. The estimated expenditure is £2,730,000, leaving a balance of £920,000. After allowing for the payment of interest charges, however, we expect to have a balance of £5,000. The result forecasted is £68,000 better than the amount actually realised last year, but with a record harvest in sight, there should be little difficulty in obtaining that result. The estimated increased revenue amounts to £333,000, and additional expenditure of £210,000 is being provided for. A concern like the Railway Department is constantly increasing its capital expenditure, which means an increase in the interest bill. The increased interest that will have to be met during the current year is estimated at £55,000. This is due principally to the taking over by the department of new railways, but the building of additional rolling stock and the effecting of various improvements throughout the system also account for increased interest charges. The principal sources of revenue last year were: Local coal £104,000, wheat £303,000, local timber £417,000; general goods £456,000, live stock £148,000, and passenger and parcels traffic £969,000. Granted that we experience no industrial disputes, the department has a busy time ahead of it to provide for the transport of local timber and the big harvest. It is officially estimated that the harvest this year will be just on 29,000,000 bushels, which is 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 bushels in excess of the previous record. Live stock traffic should equal that of last year, while with the present stable condition of the shipping industry general goods traffic should also improve. Members would hardly think that the coal strike in England would adversely affect our railway earnings. Considerable quantities of goods are imported from England, and most of those goods provide high class freights for the railways. A considerable amount of such traffic is usually transported over our railways during the winter months, but the existence of the coal strike 12,000 miles away has resulted in the loss of that traffic. Wheat transported during the year 1925-26 totalled 5,200,000 bags,

compared with 6,442,000 bags in the preceding year, a decrease of nearly $1\frac{1}{4}$ million bags. The decrease was accounted for by the lessened production owing to the light rainfall. The average distance over which wheat was hauled was 131 miles, or eight miles less than in the previous year. This shows that greater use has been made of the natural ports for the export of wheat. The Government are encouraging the haulage of wheat to the nearest port, and although wheat is being grown further and further away from the coast, the average haulage has decreased because of its being transported to the nearest port.

Mr. Griffiths: That is very satisfactory.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Improvements to the rolling stock have been made during the year, and with the new trucks constructed and the additional power made available by the regeneration of locomotive stock, the shifting of the harvest can be contemplated with confidence. Though the number of locomotives is smaller than before, the tractive power shows a considerable increase. The condition of the locomotives under a new system of classification appears to be not so good as it was a year ago, but as an actual fact it is considerably better. At present we have only six locomotives not in a fit condition for transport work, compared with sixteen 12 months ago. During the year 165 Ge trucks were added to the stock, while others are under construction in the workshops. The coal strike in England has also interfered with the construction of rolling stock. Material for a considerable number of trucks ordered over six months ago has not come to hand, and the only advice we have been able to obtain is that the material cannot be delivered until two months after the coal strike will have ended. But for the coal strike we would have had sufficient material to build 250 extra steel trucks, each of 14 tons capacity. Members can calculate for themselves the increased tonnage represented by those trucks. A considerable number of them would have been ready now, and most if not all of them would have been on the track before half the harvest had been transported. We have set out to build locomotives instead of importing them, as was done by the previous Government. I admit that the Mitchell Government were not entirely responsible for that. A Royal Commissioner who inquired into the railways stated that additional locomotive power would not be required, and the

Government of the day, acting upon his report, cancelled an order that had been given for additional locomotives. Within 12 months, however, it was found that the extra engines were necessary.

Hon. W. J. George: In what year was that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: About 1922. The Royal Commissioner, Mr. Stead, proved a bad prophet, because 12 months later steps had to be taken to secure additional locomotives, and as they could not be built locally in the time, they were imported from the Old Country.

Hon. W. J. George: The Government of the day were influenced a good deal by the amount of money available.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But the engines required could not be constructed in the time, and had to be imported. We did not have a Royal Commissioner to tell us that additional engines were required.

Hon. W. J. George: If you did not have a Royal Commission, you had all the luck.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But it was our luck to find, immediately we took office, that a considerable amount of rolling stock had to be provided. We had to spend twice as much money as the previous Government spent, and in half the time. We spent about £360,000 on rolling stock in two years, compared with £180,000 spent by the previous Government in four years.

Hon. W. J. George: That showed the progress of the State.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With soldiers returning from the war and hundreds of people taking up land, it should have been apparent that within a few years a lot of additional rolling stock would be needed to transport the increased yields of produce. That was the time when a little foresight should have been exhibited. As I have pointed out, however, the Government of the day were not entirely to blame. Governments are limited as to the loan funds they are able to expend, and it must be remembered that interest rates were particularly high at the time. Still, the fact remains that when we took office, we had to provide a considerable amount of rolling stock at once. The engines being constructed in the Midland Junction workshops at present are of the same design as those which were imported from England 12 months ago.

Mr. Sampson: Did Parliament approve of the Royal Commission of which you spoke?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Parliament did not have to approve of it. The Government of the day had to take the responsibility of accepting or rejecting the recommendations of the commissioner. The 10 new locomotives being built at Midland Junction are well in hand. I expect that the first of them will be ready for the track in three or four weeks. If Parliament is then sitting, as I expect it will be—

Hon. W. J. George: What, in three or four weeks' time!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Hon. W. J. George: You will be electioneering then, surely.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We might or we might not.

Mr. Davy: You are electioneering now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If Parliament is sitting at the time, I hope to be able to arrange a visit of inspection to the Midland workshops, as was done 12 months ago, so that the public men of the State may be able to see what can be done in the way of locomotive construction in our own workshops. I have visited the workshops three or four times lately, and undoubtedly the work in the new engines compares favourably with that of the imported engines. We shall get pretty close to the imported locomotives in price, and so far as can be judged, I think we shall have a better engine. If the men who have subsequently to keep the locomotives in repair are entrusted with the work of constructing them, they are likely to exhibit more interest in the work than are those who merely manufacture them for sale. Our experience has been that we can get as good a job done in our own workshops as in England.

Hon. W. J. George: Are you using all British, or are you getting some German material?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A lot of it is Australian material—

Hon. W. J. George: That is better still.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: —and practically all the rest is British. This work has had a beneficial effect on the economic life of the State. The manufacturing of these engines has enabled us to keep considerably over 100 men employed all the time, and we have also been able to put on 20 or 30 apprentices. In addition to the 10 new locomotives we built two

coaches and 120 G.C. wagons. All of the 165 wagons are practically out of the shop. With regard to the 255 all-steel wagons we thought we would have for the coming harvest, the material has not arrived, and it seems to me will not get here in time to give us the benefit of this rolling stock this season.

Hon. W. J. George: What will the steel wagons carry?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They will carry 14 tons and the tare will be equal to that of a 10-ton wagon. We shall thus get a load 40 per cent. greater for an equal tare. In addition we are manufacturing 25 D.A. vans and 15 brake vans. We are also manufacturing a considerable number of tarpaulins. For years there has been a shortage of tarpaulins, which has been felt especially in the winter. During the year before last a considerable amount of super was damaged because of this factor, and last year the delivery of super was held up for a fortnight owing to there being an insufficient number of sheets available. We have now gone into this matter in a proper way. Last year we increased the total number of sheets by 30 per cent. and this year we shall do the same. Towards the end of this coming harvest, when we may still be running wheat trains, there should be a sufficient number of tarpaulins to cope with the business. In the last two years we have increased the stock by about 60 per cent. This should have a good effect upon the super and wheat traffic. In addition to the 150 G.C. wagons, we have converted 30 old-style water tanks into low-sided trucks for machinery. These are broader than the ordinary standard sized wagons and are specially suited for the carriage of 8ft. harvesters. One of the wheels used to project beyond the wagon, which often led to damage being done to the implement. These converted wagons are found to be exceptionally convenient, and have been favourably commented upon wherever used. It would have been better had we been able to secure the material from England, but the net result this year will be that we shall have 250 additional wagons available for the transport of the harvest.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the locomotives come out as cheaply as the English locomotives with the duty added?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not quite as cheaply, but the difference will not be great. Even if the difference works out

at 10 per cent., it will be good business. It is the policy of the Government to give preference to local products even if the cost is 10 per cent. more than the imported article; but it is not expected in this case that the difference will be as great as 10 per cent. The cost has only been estimated. The Deputy Commissioner, however, expects to come well within the estimate, besides providing something extra in the way of electric headlights, which are quite outside the original specifications. Progress has been made with the fitting of vacuum brakes. All new wagons will be fitted in this way, and over 75 per cent. of the rolling stock has been similarly equipped. We shall increase that percentage as we go on. For years past, while the harvest was being shifted, there has been an outcry concerning a shortage of trucks. Some people want to get an advantage by taking more trucks than it is reasonable they should get. Last year there was a hullabaloo in the Press, particularly due to shippers of wheat bringing their vessels in at a time when they were not ordered. Notwithstanding all this fuss about the shortage of trucks, almost the entire harvest was shifted by the end of April. Because the Railway Department had gone to a lot of expense and trouble in shifting the harvest so quickly, it was found in May and June that we had done this work too soon from the economic point of view, and that there were the lowest traffic receipts in those two months that had come to hand within the previous five years. We did all the business in the first four months in order to pander to those who were making the outcry, and we got on so well that we had shifted the wheat practically by the end of April. This meant that in May and June we were doing less work during those months than we had done during the previous five years. There was an entire slump, which was responsible for a considerable amount of retrenchment. Had this outcry not occurred during February and March, we could have gone on in the way we had planned, and would have been doing the business during the month of May. This would have rendered unnecessary the retrenchment of men that had to take place during May and June. This will not be done next year. Undoubtedly there will be another outcry concerning the shortage of trucks. People need not come to me again, or to the department, and say they expect us to do more than we are doing.

The department will meet the representatives of the wheat-buying firms, and will lay down the programme for the shifting of the wheat by the end of June. In this way we will spread the transport of the wheat over about six months. Whatever we say we will do, we will stand by. If the wheat agents like to bring five or six ships in the harbour unexpectedly, and do not arrange to have the wheat at Fremantle for loading, the Railway Department cannot be held responsible. I refuse to take any blame for that state of affairs. I am prepared to get down to a business arrangement with these people, and whatever we say we will do, we will do. We will state how long we shall take to shift the harvest, how much wheat we shall move each week, and in that way go on shifting the harvest within reasonable time.

Mr. Mann: The ships are chartered months ahead.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the agents do that without consulting the Railway Department, they must take the blame for what follows.

Mr. Mann: If they did not do this, they would not get their ships.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They have no right to make charters in the expectation of securing double the amount of wheat they did last year. If they get a little more than they got last year they will have sufficient wheat to load their ships. If they bring in more ships than the harbour will accommodate, or the Railway Department can cope with, they must do so at their own risk.

Mr. Davy: Are they going to do that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They did it last year.

Mr. Mann: In order to get cheap charters, they must take their ships when they can get them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is all right from their point of view but if they cannot get the wheat at unexpected times, it is no use kicking up a row about it. Last year there was not a very good harvest in the other States, and a considerable amount of shipping was diverted to Western Australia. Some of the vessels that were allowed a fortnight either way came in a fortnight late, and others came in a fortnight early. As a result of this five or six ships arrived in Fremantle together expecting to be able to come alongside and

immediately load up to their full capacity. Because some of these vessels were delayed the wheat agents made a fuss. Of course they had to pay demurrage and were very much concerned about it. They wanted to get more wheat than they really expected would be available for them.

Hon. W. J. George: If they transferred ships from another port to Fremantle, they could not reasonably complain.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: For early deliveries there is always a premium on wheat. As things were, they made a sufficient outcry to induce the authorities to pay a lot away in overtime and in extra expense, in order that they might get a somewhat earlier delivery and make a profit of 2d. or 3d. a bushel extra. From their own point of view they were justified in doing this, but they were not justified in getting this profit out of the State. Last year they were in an unfortunate position. To help them we went to considerable expense in paying overtime and Sunday time and in employing extra labour. We got them out of their difficulty.

Mr. Davy: And you will do it again.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, because we got ourselves into trouble.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You deserved to be in trouble.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We shall not get into trouble again. As a result of our operations last year, we had hundreds or thousands of trucks lying idle all over the system. It cost this State between £30,000 and £40,000 in order that these people might profit to the extent of £5,000 or £6,000.

Mr. Mann: Such conditions prevailed in the other States.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course they did.

Mr. Mann: Winter time is always a slack period for trucks.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not talking about the winter time, but about May or June. In no place in the world will the railways undertake to shift the harvest in two or three months.

Mr. Mann: That gave you six months.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. We had shifted all the harvest by the end of April.

Mr. Lindsay: That was five months.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not.

Mr. Davy: Why did you do it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: To help the agents, because they had got themselves into financial difficulties.

Mr. Davy: Did you not anticipate the horrible reaction?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, but I was prepared, in the interests of the State, and in the interests of the agents, to get them out of their trouble.

Mr. Davy: And you will do it again if the interests of the State justify it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. We incurred an additional expense of between £30,000 and £40,000 to get these people out of trouble. For this expenditure they got the benefit of perhaps £10,000.

Hon. W. J. George: It meant kudos for the State, and that is worth something.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If it is in the interests of producers, and by securing early delivery there is an economic advantage to the State of £100,000, the Government will be prepared to spend an additional sum of between £30,000 and £40,000; but we are not prepared to spend £40,000 on such work in order that the wheat agents may make a profit of £20,000.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You saved them from disaster, and you were not called upon to do it.

[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And it was all due to their not having made proper arrangements.

Mr. Davy: Why did you do it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have already informed the hon. member. I have the highest respect for his intelligence, and cannot help thinking he must understand what I have told him. Probably there will be a shortage of trucks this year. There always will be a shortage.

Hon. G. Taylor: You cannot keep pace with the rush traffic.

Mr. Mann: Because you have not made adequate provision for the traffic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will tell the hon. member what the Government have done. We have spent four times as much on rolling stock in two years as the previous Government spent in four years.

Hon. W. J. George: If we had been there we would have spent five times as much.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is all right.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is easily said.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We would have been in a much better position had we been able to get material which has been on order for over six months, material for 262 wagons.

Hon. W. J. George: We had not the necessary funds.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Before the hon. member interjecting entered the Chamber, I gave him full credit for what he did while at the railways, and also stated his difficulties. Our ratio of truck building will continue. Further, we are making such improvements in the system as will enable us to derive greater benefit from the existing truck supply. We are spending £70,000 in re-grading. I know the Leader of the Opposition does not believe in re-grading. He thinks it better to build new railways and new trucks. However, £70,000 spent in re-grading has caused an increase of four per cent. in train mileage, and that is equal to 550 extra trucks, which would cost nearly three times the amount spent in re-grading. Over easier grades we can increase the train mileage by four per cent., and we have done so during recent years, thus obtaining the equivalent of 550 additional trucks.

Hon. W. J. George: You have adjusted your train loads.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. We are now spending £30,000 in re-grading at Wooroloo, where a heavy bank is being taken out. The easier grade will prevent the necessity for kicking off trucks.

Hon. W. J. George: You are following out the policy which I adopted as Commissioner of Railways.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. The hon. member has a very practical knowledge of railway working and if he had remained in charge of the department we would not have our present difficulties.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You save more by increased engine power than by re-grading.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. When one has to kick off trucks and bring along another engine to pick them up, it means considerable delay. As it is now, the trucks are unloaded and sent back for re-loading on the same day.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not think that is so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member understands well enough. This year the harvest is expected to be nearly 29 million bushels.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is a statistic's estimate. It will be more than that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I hope so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The insurance is on a heavier basis than that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I hope the expectation will be more than realised, and I shall be pleased from the railway standpoint to do everything possible to shift the harvest. Seeding requirements will be about three million bushels; so we anticipate having to shift approximately 26 million bushels or eight million bags. We expect to be able to do that by the end of June; but if we cannot do it, we will provide sufficient tarpaulins to transport later without any damage.

Mr. Davy: It has got to be done somehow.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The harvest will be shifted. We are putting on additional men. We have better engines, better facilities, and better grades. Moreover we have automatic signalling, which expedites train working considerably. In view of all these improvements we shall be able to carry out the shifting of the harvest as well as it can possibly be done. The trouble is that no matter how well one does, some Jeremiah is sure to begin criticising in the Press, and discouraging everybody by crying out about shortage of trucks and saying that it should have been provided against years ago.

Hon. G. Taylor: That sort of thing has been going on for 10 years.

Mr. Mann: Do you object to criticism?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No: but that kind of parrot cry is not helpful. I have no doubt the parrot cry about shortage of trucks will be heard next year. It always has been heard, and probably always will be. I do not want people to take too much notice of it.

Mr. Mann: You will lose a lot of money if you do not provide adequate facilities.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have provided adequate facilities.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Private enterprise beat the pool last year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Private enterprise will not do so this year. Private enterprise will receive the trucks it is entitled to, and no more. I understand

that the pool has secured 60 per cent. of the wheat this year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Get out! We have got 80 per cent.

Mr. Mann: How can you tell what you have got?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: At any rate, I have as much right to say 80 per cent. as the Minister has to say 60 per cent.

Mr. Davy: You do not know what you have got.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The people who have 80 per cent. of the wheat will get 80 per cent. of the trucks available, and the people who have 20 per cent. of the wheat will get trucks in accordance with their requirements.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That will be worth threepence a bushel to the cockies.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the railways are to shift between 280,000 and 300,000 bags of wheat every week, then the Westralian Farmers or the pool—I believe there are three concerns in the business—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If they are going to shift 60 per cent. of the wheat, they are going to get 60 per cent. of the trucks.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do not accept their statements about the quantity of wheat they have got.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We shall have to get evidence on the point. The staff of the Railway Department at the end of last year numbered 8,000, representing an increase of about 400 on the previous year. The exact increase was 399, of whom 363 were wages men and 36 salaried men. The increase in both salaried and wages men was due partly to the introduction of the 44-hour week and partly to the extension of the railway system, the building of additional lines necessitating the sending out of men to look after railway business in the new districts. The system made a small loss last year, but we expect to make it good this year. The full effect of the reduction in railway freights in conjunction with increased land taxation was felt last year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The amount was not paid in.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was not paid into railway revenue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is the Treasurer going to do that this year?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Whether the Treasurer does that or not will not make any difference. If he does it, the Railway Department will make so much more profit and will hand the amount back to him. However, there is a difference from the standpoint of railway finance. Our earnings were £40,000 less. That amount does not represent a loss to the Government, but it is important from the standpoint of the Railway Department. It was collected from another source, and in consequence the railway revenue was £40,000 short.

Mr. Lindsay: The railways show that as a loss.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was not a loss, but it was decreased revenue.

Mr. Lindsay: And then we have the cry that the railways are not paying because the freights are not high enough.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member need not be disturbed as to that point. I do not like these interjections, as they cause me to make remarks which are political. The wages of the railway employees have been increased by £160,000 during the past two years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There has been an increase in the cost of living too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Any Government in power would have had to pay the same increases; but when the previous Government were in power and wages were increased, freights were increased simultaneously. That was a case of passing it on. We are not passing on the increases granted in our time. On the contrary, there have been several reductions in freight outside the main reductions representing the £40,000. For instance, we have instituted a system of cheap mid-day tickets in the metropolitan area. We did not get much additional passenger traffic from that system, but an advantage we gained was that more people travelled during the hours when trains are not well filled—between 10.30 a.m. and 4 p.m. The reduction on the return ticket was 25 per cent. One effect was that people did not make their return journeys between 5 and 6 p.m., when the trains are crowded in any case. Thus the crowding was not accentuated. We have lost revenue to the extent of 25 per cent. of all railway fares within the metropolitan area during the hours from 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: It is a question whether you lost on the whole.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We lost the amount represented by the reduction in fares. We did not secure additional passenger traffic. The cash on delivery parcel system, which was introduced in the latter part of 1925, has been availed of during the year, and there is a steady increase in the number of parcels despatched on that system. It is hoped that when the benefits of the system are even more widely known, more advantage will be taken of it than has been the case in the past.

Mr. Griffiths: It is highly appreciated.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is highly appreciated, but by a comparative few. It has not been taken advantage of to nearly the extent that it might. The system is not very well known. There is this additional disadvantage, that we have hundreds of sidings where there are no station masters, so that the system cannot be taken advantage of. Special excursions were run in order to give country women and children an opportunity to visit the coast during the summer months. Last year those participating showed a considerable increase over the numbers recorded during the preceding year. The same facilities will be available during next summer. Although we have increased the wages of railway employees by £160,000 annually, we hope by means of economies, extra efficiency, bigger trucks and so on, to so improve the system that we will get through without passing any extra cost on to the producers. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) who has been concerned on that score may rest assured that we entertain no idea of increasing fares and freights as a result of the increased wages bill. We have a most contented service and each railway employee is satisfied that the remuneration he is receiving is as much as he can expect. All are, therefore, reasonably satisfied. Naturally, I do not suppose anyone can ever be absolutely satisfied.

Mr. Teesdale: At any rate, they would not tell you if they were.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But they have said so. The railway employees realise that much has been done for them.

Mr. Teesdale: Is that a fact?

Mr. Lindsay: While the increase in wages may be all right, the shortening of the hours of employment is not all right.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The workers appreciate that concession, too. In fact, there is a good feeling throughout the department, and splendid co-operation between the management and the staff, such as has not been in evidence for years. Every one is getting a fair deal. It means that each railway employee, when he collects his wages, gets 16s. more than was paid two years ago, on top of which the working hours have been reduced. If there is any gratitude in people—and I think there is—it should be reflected in the efficiency with which those people carry out their tasks.

Mr. Teesdale: There ought to be gratitude and efficiency.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And there is, too. I have travelled in various parts of the State and it is apparent. I will not go into details regarding the regrading that has been undertaken during the year, but will deal with one or two by way of example. Regrading has been carried on between Perth and Bunbury, between Perth and Spencer's Brook, between Spencer's Brook and Albany and between Goomalling and Merredin. On the Bunbury line the grade was altered from 1 in 78 to 1 in 100, enabling a load of 150 tons extra to be hauled.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That regrading was started some time ago.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and was finished about 12 months ago. Between Perth and Spencer's Brook the grading was altered from 1 in 56 to 1 in 80 on the up road. That enables 130 tons extra to be hauled, representing an increased load of 35 per cent.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is on the up road?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. We are not worrying about the other road, because the traffic all gravitates this way. Between Spencer's Brook and Albany the line for a distance of about 85 miles was dealt with and the grade was altered from 1 in 70 to 1 in 100, making available extra haulage of 230 tons, representing an extra load of 42 per cent. Between Goomalling and Merredin, over a length of 102 miles, we decreased the grade from 1 in 41 to 1 in 60, enabling a load of 80 tons extra to be hauled, representing an increase of 33 per cent. This means that instead of dropping trucks and leaving them behind, they can now be hauled straight through to their destination.

Mr. North: The Commissioner desires to regrade more tracks if he can get the money.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We could have dead level lines if we had the money.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As the Leader of the Opposition interjected, it would be possible to make all the lines level if we had the money. As it is, we could alter the existing grades to 1 in 150 or 1 in 200 without a vast expenditure. On the other hand, with so much development proceeding throughout the country, it is necessary for the Government to construct new railways where required, to provide agricultural water supplies, to instal sewerage systems and so on. I notice that in his report the Commissioner says that he is desirous of spending £4,000,000!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: On what?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: On additions and improvements to the existing system. Of course he cannot get the money; the Treasurer could not raise it. If he could provide the money, it would not be reasonable to spend such a vast sum in connection with the operations of one department. Despite that, practically everything advocated by the Commissioner represents a sound proposition, commercially and economically. Of course, it is impossible to contemplate one department alone spending £4,000,000; it could not be done, however desirable it might be. Re-laying has proceeded to a considerable extent, but that expenditure is met out of revenue. This year it will mean spending £53,000 to do what is necessary. We cannot have railways without the lines wearing out. For instance, at Geraldton there is a railway that was put down 40 years ago and it has never been relaid. The engineer tells me that it must be relaid, for he will not take the responsibility of running trains over it any longer.

Mr. Marshall: Is that the fast express between Geraldton and Ajana?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That line was constructed 10 or 12 years ago.

Mr. Marshall: I mean the line out from Northampton.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was built about 12 years ago. Re-laying has to be carried out in order to keep the service up to date. Railway tracks like clothes, wear out and have to be replaced. I do not wish to deal with the question of motor competition, for everyone knows what

that means. It has seriously affected our passenger revenue. The charabancs have certainly depleted our revenue to a great extent, but the use of private motor cars has made serious inroads in our passenger traffic. People who, five or six years ago, would not have dreamt of coming to town by road from Northam, are accustomed to make that journey now and daily dozens of cars are to be seen on the road.

Mr. Mann: That is happening all over the world.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And it is to be expected, because the cars are so much more convenient, enabling people to come and go whenever they like.

Mr. Mann: Do you agree with the policy of the Railway Commissioner in South Australia? He has made use of motor trucks to subsidise the railway service.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: To a certain extent I agree with that policy, and we have installed motor trucks between Norseman and Salmon Gums, at Tambellup and at Cranbrook.

Mr. Mann: In South Australia the trucks go out to the farms and take consignments to the railway station.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If Western Australia were a thoroughly developed country, rendering unnecessary the construction of a large number of new railways, we could adopt a similar policy. Our job, however, is not to spend money on such activities but on the construction of new railways to deal with the ordinary traffic of a railway system. At the Midland railway workshops the construction of 22 new locomotive boilers has been undertaken. That includes two boilers for timber companies. We are also building two or three sleeping coaches for the Midland Railway Company. A splendid job is being made of those coaches. Thus we are keeping employment within the State, and it is not now necessary to import boilers.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Midland coaches are better than ours, for they have two-berth compartments.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The trouble about our system is that there are so many matters that require attention.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And we want that to be our trouble!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Quite so, but it is necessary to provide money in order to afford proper facilities. Any hon. member in this House is able to

advise me upon many means by which money can be expended in the provision of proper and necessary facilities. The member for Toodyay can tell me of many requirements and the member for York can tell me of the necessity for the expenditure of some thousands of pounds in the provision of proper railway yards and facilities at Merredin. And so it could go on. Many of the necessary works have been put off for so long that the position is acute. Procrastination has made work imperative to-day. All country members know of many facilities that ought to be provided, but the Government can only give attention to them gradually. If the Treasurer could make available £1,000,000, I could easily spend it straight away. The member for Williams-Narrogin considers that it is in the best interests of the State that a new platform should be erected at Wickopin.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And that is necessary.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I agree that it is.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When I require something for my electorate, I never breathe about it to a soul; I get it done.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member was Premier for too long a period to allow his centre to have any requirements now!

Mr. E. B. Johnston: We want a new station at Narrogin.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so, but we can spend a certain amount of money each year and no more. While £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 could be profitably spent in a comparatively few months, I do not believe anyone can say that anything unnecessary has been undertaken. However, we have to cut our coat according to the cloth, and we cannot do everything at once. Turning from the railways, I will deal briefly with the transactions of the tramways. The estimated financial results for the current year are: revenue, £295,000; expenditure, £238,000; leaving a balance of £57,000, out of which £47,000 will have to be paid by way of interest. That leaves a net profit of £10,000.

Mr. Mann: Has anything been allowed for depreciation?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. Mann: That is a very heavy item.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Perhaps the hon. member does not know that out of the tramway revenue since last year

and for the next five years, over £20,000 is being set aside for re-laying. We have already spent between £60,000 and £70,000 in re-laying tracks.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is always going on.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And the expenditure cannot be taken out of one year's revenue. The system was practically built at the one time which means that the whole of the tracks require re-laying at the same time. We have to do a certain amount each year and allocate funds accordingly. For the next four or five years £21,000 will be set aside out of revenue for this purpose. A considerable amount of re-laying has already been done. More will be undertaken when we receive the rails that have been on order for several months. Those rails have been held up in the same way as the material for trucks has been held up. We must do some re-laying, because some of the tracks are verging on the dangerous stage. In fact I will not take the responsibility of running trams over some of the lines if they are to continue in their present state.

Mr. Mann: The Wellington-street section is dangerous.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But there is not much traffic over that line. There are only two trams running backwards and forwards over that section. Its condition cannot compare with that of the section between Pier-street and Mint-street. That section was recently re-laid. It had reached such a stage of disrepair that trams on several occasions touched each other when crossing. That job, however, has been done. But it all costs a lot of money. We have ordered a quantity of rails, but we do not know when to expect them. The manufacturers in England have notified us that they cannot deliver until two months after the conclusion of the coal strike. A good deal has been saved on maintenance. We have relaid a considerable length of track that will not require attention for the next four or five years. There are the section from Newcastle-street to Walcott-street, the Victoria Park section, and the section from the Weld Club to Crawley. Other sections will have to be relaid within the next few months, for it is of no use trying to patch up some of the older tracks. As soon as our rails come to hand, this re-laying will be put in hand. The member for Mt. Margaret will be able to tell us of the condition of the track along Oxford-street.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is just shocking.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We cannot patch up that section; it must be relaid.

Hon. G. Taylor: I hope you will not have an accident there before the rails come to hand.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Electricity Supply has been progressing. The annual report of the Commissioner shows how rapid the increase has been. Two years ago it was necessary to increase the plant by another unit. It is now costing a quarter of a million to augment the supply.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was always about that. We increased the plant by a 7,500 unit.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, but the system is growing so rapidly that we have had to increase it again.

Mr. Maun: For how long do you think you have provided?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is difficult to say. When the late Government put in that new unit, it was expected that it would be sufficient for the next seven years. Yet they had scarcely left office when we had to find £250,000 for another increase. The unfortunate part of it is that the more we increase the supply of current, the worse the financial position we are getting into.

Hon. G. Taylor: The more you sell, the more you lose.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. We sell current to the City Council for three-farthings per unit, and each unit costs us .9d.

Hon. G. Taylor: How long has the agreement to run?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Some fifty years. I think I have given members all the information they require but, if they want anything further, I will endeavour to supply it. We can look forward with confidence to the shifting of the harvest this year. Of course, there will be growling, but whichever Government be in power, the growling will go on. We have spent more money on rolling stock than did the previous Government, and had we been able to get material with which to build those extra trucks, the position would have been better still. However, I can assure members that no effort will be spared by all those concerned to shift the harvest expeditiously, so that we may get back its value and spend it in the State.

HON SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [9.6]: I do not object to regrading. We must regrade our lines. What I said the other night was that we must endeavour to carry on with the existing lines as they are, until we can build some of those lines that have been authorised for years past. During the last 2½ years we have built only the line to Newdegate, some 45 miles, and the line from Narrogin to Dwarda. Those are the only two.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Then there is the line to Salmon Gums.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, that has been started. However, even with that line thrown in, it is but a very small programme. At that rate it will take many years to construct the lines already authorised, such as the Dale River line, the Denmark-Nornalup, the Pemberton-Nornalup, and the Yarramongy line. Of course regrading pays, if we can afford the money for it. I do not object to regrading, but we have not had sufficient money to meet the requirements of the country in the shape of additional railways. The present Government have been far more fortunate than were our Government, because money has been very much cheaper during the last year or two and we have had a lot of exceptionally cheap money under one scheme or another. The Minister for Water Supply to-night explained that he was putting in district supplies with this migration money at 1 per cent. We must build the authorised railways. We were relaying lines when the present Government came in, and we were taking the money from revenue, whereas I suppose it is now being taken from loan. We relaid the section between Northam and Goomalling. I hope the Minister will not put down 45lb. rails again; they should be nothing less than 60lbs. These rails do not wear out. The only rails we have ever worn out have been some on the lines through the hills, where the curves and grades are pretty bad. We want 60lb. rails over the greater part of the system, and 80lb. rails between here and Northam, a most important section. I have not much fear that the Railway Department will not be able to handle the harvest. During the last few years officers and men alike of the department have worked very well together. The whole staff is concerned in the good management and success of the railways. There can be no doubt about

that. They are doing the best they can. Of course it follows that when they are well paid they are satisfied. But apart altogether from that aspect, they are very keen on the success of the railways, and every officer, from the Commissioner downwards, is doing his very best. I am sorry that, owing to ill-health, the Commissioner has had to go abroad just at this time, and I hope he will return fully restored to health. He has done wonderfully useful work as Commissioner of Railways. The Minister said we could expect to have to shift 26,000,000 bushels of wheat. Those figures published this morning are the result of estimates sent in months ago by the farmers themselves.

The Minister for Railways: They have been pretty accurate during the past few years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the crop is very much better than we expected a month or two ago. There is less being cut for hay, and so long as nothing unforeseen happens, such as bad hail storms, we shall certainly have a good deal more wheat than the published figures indicate. Of course, it cannot all be handled within a month or two, for even at Fremantle, Geraldton, and Albany an unlimited number of vessels cannot be accommodated. I wish it were possible for the wheat to be sent to the nearest port. It would save trucks and give quicker despatch.

The Minister for Railways: We are giving preference to trucks that load for the nearest port.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister knows that a little time ago we were getting only 30 miles per day out of the trucks. I think the Commissioner's last report showed that it had increased by five miles per day, which means a very big increase in the tonnage shipped by a given number of trucks. If we could get the trucks to cover 40 miles per day, the trouble would be over. Of course the railways will have the wheat to shift. Regarding the cost of working the railways, the Minister takes some credit for the increase of wages paid per man. He need not take credit for that increase because it was granted by the court.

The Minister for Railways: We created the court that gave the increase. But for the basic wage provisions in the Arbitration Act, the basic wage would not now be £4 5s. per week.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know the Minister attended a meeting and made a statement to that effect.

The Minister for Railways: You were in the House when the Bill was passed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister means that the present Government appointed the president of the court—

The Minister for Railways: We created the machinery for declaring a basic wage, and that basic wage is higher than it would have been but for the alteration of the Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That has nothing at all to do with the Government.

The Minister for Railways: The Government introduced the basic wage provisions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The court fixed the wages.

The Minister for Railways: On different premises, because we were responsible for having altered the basic wage provisions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That does not matter. The Minister said the wages increase per man was £16 and there had been no increase of freight to meet it. Let me remind the Minister that there has been a great deal more freight for the railways to carry. In the time of my Government the wages per man were increased by £58, not £16. Naturally such a heavy increase could not be met without increasing freights. The earnings of the railways have to cover the expenditure, and when the expenditure was increased by the court, as it was, to the extent of £58 per man per annum, it meant a much bigger sum than an increase of £16 per man.

The Minister for Railways: The increase is £22 per man—16s. per fortnight.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The increase is £16. The freight increase of some years ago, however, still remains, but with the extra traffic, freights should be reduced. The result of railway operations last year was not satisfactory. The amount of £45,000 collected by way of land tax should be paid to the Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister for Railways: What would he do with it? He would hand it back to the Treasury.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Only if the railways showed a surplus. That sum should be handed over to the Commissioner so that the people could see from the public figures the actual result.

Mr. Lindsay: That is the point.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We would not be justified in making the railways a revenue-producing concern. If the people pay an additional £45,000 by way of increased land tax—an absolutely rotten principle, which should never have been introduced—the amount should certainly be handed to the Commissioner, who should reduce freights as much as possible. The trouble is that the people who pay the land tax are not the people who obtain the benefit of the reduced freights. A reduction of £45,000 spread over the whole of the earnings of the railways would hardly be noticeable. To make it noticeable it would have to be applied to only a few classes of freight. The people who pay the land tax are not getting any benefit at all from it. It is a rotten principle that a special tax of that kind should be imposed. I said so at the time and I hope the people will remember it. It is a tax that should be abolished as speedily as possible. The railway operations last year showed a loss of £31,982, less the £45,000 which should have been credited to the railways and which would have meant a profit of £14,000. In 1923 there was a profit of £190,000; in 1924, a profit of £142,000; in 1925, a loss of £62,000; and in 1926, a loss of £257,000. We have been able to improve our position by reason of the increased production.

The Minister for Railways: There was a decrease of production last year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A very slight decrease.

The Minister for Railways: It amounted to 4,000,000 bushels of wheat.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Taking the tonnage hauled and the earnings, the difference was very slight. Of course there was some difference, which occasioned some loss.

The Minister for Railways: We spent £30,000 on water alone owing to the dry year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There are always some exceptional conditions that the Government have to face. In 1922 there was a strike. The earnings last year were only £18,000 less than in the previous year when we had a profit of £190,000. Yet last year there was a loss of £32,000. To drop from a profit of £190,000 to a loss of £32,000 is a difference of over £220,000 in the working result of the railways. That is not justified by the total expenditure or the total

earnings. The expenditure, of course, was greater or that result would not have been produced.

The Minister for Railways: Do you know we carted free of charge thousands of head of stock back to areas that had been drought stricken?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I suppose that always occurs after a drought.

The Minister for Railways: The fact remains that there was a drought and we carted the starving stock.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We have had droughts in other years. It is impossible to escape the fact that we had a profit of £190,000 in the previous year and a loss of £32,000 last year when the earnings were only £22,000 less. That fact warrants inquiry. To earn less revenue, the expenditure increased by £201,000 for the year. There is something wrong with that.

The Minister for Railways: We can do what you did—increase freights to make up for increased wages if you want it that way.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the Government had £190,000 profit to meet the increased wages bill.

The Minister for Railways: The increase of wages imposed by the court was not met by any increase of freight.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Will the Minister not realise that in the previous year he had a profit of £190,000? In view of that profit, he could not increase freights.

The Minister for Railways: But increased wages were paid.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not to the extent of £190,000 a year.

The Minister for Railways: The increase of wages represented £160,000, and I have told you there was £30,000 for water.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: All those troubles occur from time to time, and have to be met by the Government. It is certainly a record to have converted a credit of £190,000 into a debit of £32,000 when the earnings were only £22,000 lower. Where has the money gone? I hope the question will be inquired into. It is useless to say that the increase of wages was responsible for the difference. Last year was not the only year in which an increase of wages was granted.

The Minister for Railways: If you want us to make a profit we could do so by increasing the rates as you did.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: When the Minister increases the wages by £58 per

man per annum, as we did, he will have to increase the freights, but when the increase granted is only £16 per man, it is quite a different matter. We were faced with a loss owing to lack of traffic. The Minister in 1924 had a credit balance of £142,000, and the next year there was a credit of £190,000. In the face of those figures, why should he increase freights?

The Minister for Railways: We do not want to increase them, but if you wish to get back to that position, we could easily do it by increasing freights.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Why should freights be increased? The Minister could not justify an increase.

The Minister for Railways: You seem to want to justify it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why worry about that? It does not prove anything.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am taking the figures of the Railway Department, and showing how easily and gently and without jerk or jolt a great credit balance has been converted into a debit balance. Last year the Queensland railways showed a loss of £1,792,000.

Mr. Lindsay: Do not mention Queensland.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The railways of New South Wales showed a loss of £830,000 for the year.

Mr. Teesdale: The Port Hedland railway would sound better than Queensland.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Commonwealth railway showed a loss of £417,000, the Victorian railways a loss of £182,000, and the South Australian railways a loss of £54,000.

The Minister for Railways: All the other States are increasing their freights and fares.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But they are not increasing their traffic as we are.

The Minister for Railways: They are increasing their freights and fares, and we are not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In Queensland where the Labour Party are in office they have a notorious loss of £1,792,000 for the year.

The Minister for Railways: They run their railways in the interests of development.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And they charge just as much as is charged in any other country.

The Minister for Railways: No, they do not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In addition, there is always trouble with their railways owing to strikes and refusal on the part of the men to handle goods. We run our railways for development purposes. We built development railways to open up the goldfields, and we built them at a time when the mines produced up to 8½ million pounds worth of gold a year. We are still operating those railways when the mines are producing less than two million pounds worth of gold a year. The loss on those railways must be met by the general system. That is one of the serious handicaps. I hope the position will be improved by the discovery of other mines, or an improvement in the existing mines. The manganese deposits north of Meekatharra should help the Meekatharra-Geraldton railway. Then I hope the Wiluna goldfield will help the railways. I do not know just what the position is at Wiluna, but I believe that the work done has proved satisfactory and that the field promises well. I hope we shall have a big gold-mining centre at Wiluna, which will alter the position of the goldfields in that area. I should like to know from the Minister from what point he proposes to build the railway.

The Minister for Railways: We will deal with that later on. There is no proposal yet to build the line.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A letter was given to the company in my time stating that if the tests proved satisfactory to the Mines Department and the prospects were good we would build a railway. That was confirmed by the present Government.

The Minister for Lands: If everything proves satisfactory.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: From what point was the line going?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: From Guildford, your electorate. That is not for me to say now, but for members sitting on the Ministerial benches.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I thought your question was asked for you to find out whether your idea was confirmed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is going to be from Guildford. It will be a matter for the future if the mine comes up to expectations. I am sorry the Minister has not given the matter a little thought.

Mr. Chesson: There has not yet been an application for the railway.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Ministers ought to be frank with members. They are paid to do the business of the public in a business-like way. There should be no secrets.

The Minister for Railways: There has been no application to build a line in the terms of your letter. When we receive the application we will make up our minds.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister must hurry up, or he will not have a chance of making up his mind.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member need not worry about that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know the public will have some cause for complaint concerning the handling of the wheat. That cannot be avoided. A great deal of money has been spent in the last few years on rolling stock. The production has increased rapidly, and the money which was borrowed ought to be spent on still further increasing production, but it cannot be spent twice over. There was a limit to what we could borrow, and for a long time there was a bar to the transference of money from England to Australia. This made the position more difficult. Things are now easier. It was not possible for us to do all that we wanted to do, but it was necessary to concentrate on increased production. The work done with borrowed money over the past few years has resulted in the greater crops that we are now handling. That work was imperative. Other work was also necessary, even re-grading of the railways, but it could not all be done at once.

The Minister for Railways: Still more money is required for developmental purposes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Everything must be done gradually. We cannot shut down on reproductive works to do dead work. I think perhaps the Minister has spent a little too much money on work which, though necessary, is not highly reproductive. I am hopeful that our production will rapidly increase. Fortunately the price of wheat promises well. That makes possible a great deal of work, and justifies us in borrowing considerable sums of money for developmental purposes. I have no intention of finding fault. The Government are in charge of these things. If they do not run the railways, the trains or the electricity supply quite as well as

they were run before, that is unfortunate for the people. For the moment we on this side cannot correct it. We can only help the Government as much as possible.

The Minister for Lands: You will have some difficulty about persuading the people that you can do any better.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The public are intelligent and know as much as members know. The Minister had better leave the management of the railways to those who are in control of them.

The Minister for Railways: I do.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He should allow them to administer the Act without interference. Sometimes he does interfere. He makes announcements that should come from the Commissioner or some permanent official. I know he does not interfere with the officials themselves, and allows them to run this great system as Parliament intended, and as the Act provides. There must be no interference by the Minister other than that provided in the Act.

The Minister for Railways: On the underlying principles of policy.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister should allow the management to conduct the railways. People who travel over the railways must admit there is a wonderful improvement in the system, and a wonderful spirit operating throughout. We all rejoice at this. Only by the co-operation of all units that go to make up the entire staff, can we hope for the best results. I rejoice to hear that the railways are going to be busy; and that we shall not have to reduce any large number of men, as has been the custom for quite a number of years. Men have been promoted temporarily to higher positions, but have had to be reduced in status and salary through the falling-off in traffic. A considerable amount of traffic is going into the country from the city. The trains are pretty busy, and are carrying more general cargo than before. That is a hopeful sign, and will assist the management in the conduct of the railways. I should like to see a steady traffic throughout the year, which would make it far easier to run the railways.

The Minister for Railways: Very much easier.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In a single-crop country such as this is there must always be trouble with the railways.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.40]: Having travelled many times between Perth and the Eastern States I should like to make a few suggestions to the Minister. For the credit of Western Australia we should improve the accommodation provided on that portion of the Trans line that lies between Perth and Kalgoorlie. Time after time on my way back from the Eastern States I have heard passengers express surprise at the accommodation they have been given over other parts of the line, but all expressed dissatisfaction at that which has been given to them between Kalgoorlie and Perth.

Mr. Sleeman: Did they not complain about the line out from Port Augusta?

Mr. ANGELO: There is a small train there, but the journey is done in the daytime and nobody minds it very much. The accommodation between Perth and Kalgoorlie could be improved at practically no cost to the Government. Some time ago Colonel Pope showed me some plans and specifications of a new corridor sleeping car, on the lines of those now in use between Albury and Sydney. There is a division in the centre of the corridor, and half the accommodation is on one side of the coach and the other half is on the other side. They are all two-berth compartments containing good cupboards for clothes. Coaches of this type are very popular and very much admired on the New South Wales section. The cost of these is about £5,000 each. I understood that Colonel Pope could not bring himself to recommend them because of the extra cost. There are 20 sleeping berths on each side of the cars at present running between Perth and Kalgoorlie. A sleeper ticket costs 15s. as against 20s. in the Eastern States. If the coaches I speak of were used no one would mind paying a surcharge of 5s.

The Minister for Lands: Not when they are paying only 12s. to go to Kalgoorlie.

Mr. ANGELO: These coaches should make at least four trips a week.

Mr. Chesson: How many people would pay the extra 5s.?

Mr. ANGELO: Everyone would be glad to do so because of the improved accommodation provided. There is no difficulty in getting 20s. for sleepers in the other States.

Mr. Sleeman: What about improving the second-class sleepers?

Mr. ANGELO: If these coaches made four night trips a week they would earn an

extra £20 a week by means of the surcharge alone, which would amount to £1,000 a year. If we took only 50 per cent. of that it would amount to £500 a year per coach. This would not only pay interest and sinking fund on the capital cost, but would go a long way towards paying off the whole outlay.

Mr. Kennedy: You would not get a coach like that for £5,000.

Mr. ANGELO: That is the Commissioner's estimate.

Mr. Kennedy: I think there is a mistake. A very much smaller coach than that would cost as much as £5,000.

Mr. ANGELO: I am only quoting the estimate that was given to me.

Mr. Lambert: The increase can only be a rough estimate.

Mr. ANGELO: Even if we charge the extra 5s. for this much improved accommodation, we shall only be on a level with the Eastern States. Everybody can pay the 5s.

Mr. Sleeman: You can pay it, and I can, because we travel on gold passes.

Mr. ANGELO: Numbers of people have said to me that they would be only too pleased to pay the extra 5s. Can one wonder at it? Coming off a luxurious train like the trans, with only two berths in a large compartment, people are boxed four at a time in a little compartment, and this perhaps during the hottest part of the year. That is not right. For the credit of Western Australia let us institute the Eastern system in our part of the transcontinental train at least. We get visitors from all parts of the world, and as the train travels through the best part of the country during the night time all that these visitors see of Western Australia is their compartment of the train.

Mr. Marshall: Is that all they come here to see?

Mr. ANGELO: They might see some members of this House, and might be surprised. The member for Fremantle (**Mr. Sleeman**) mentioned the second class accommodation. I certainly intend to have something to say on that. The other evening the Minister for Works referred to the increase in accommodation for shearers from 360 cubic feet of air space to 480.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is first class.

Mr. ANGELO: That is for a shearing shed where, if a man during the evening finds the atmosphere stuffy, there is nothing to prevent him from opening a door or a

window, or else going outside to sleep. The Minister represents the workers, and it is mostly the workers who have to travel second class. The worker and his wife and children, upon reaching Kalgoorlie, are shoved six at a time into a wretched little compartment where the air space per person cannot be 30ft., let alone 360.

Hon. G. Taylor: Why not have all the accommodation first class?

Mr. ANGELO: The sleeping cars, supposed to accommodate six people on a hot section of our lines, are neither right nor healthy nor normal. I will say the accommodation is indecent, if that is a better word. Two or three years ago I criticised the dining cars.

Mr. Lambert: I quite expect you to criticise the dining cars.

Mr. ANGELO: I am glad to say I have found a big improvement in them. However, I cannot say the same for some of the refreshment rooms on our railway stations. It is certainly not satisfactory to see women and children, after a long journey, having to partake of the wretched tea and refreshments provided at some of the rooms. The Minister would be doing a good service indeed if he had some of the refreshment rooms inspected. I observe that the trams are not making the same profit as previously.

The Minister for Railways: They are.

Mr. ANGELO: Having to travel two or three times a day between the city and Subiaco, I can assure the Minister that the trams are certainly overcrowded. I do not think there is any need for that. The service could be so altered as to do away with the overcrowding. At the peak time of the day, and also at other times, trams running to the Subiaco terminus remain there from five to 12 minutes—the duration of the stop depends on the time of day. During busy periods they remain for five or six minutes; during other periods for as long as 12 minutes. I have seen two or three trams held up at the Subiaco terminus because the tram occupying the end of the line had to wait for its time table. It could not leave at once because it was scheduled to leave at a particular moment. What necessity is there for having a time table during the busy part of the day? In Sydney that is not so. There the trams are going all the time. If our trams ran to the terminus and then turned round and came back, there would be 25 per cent.

more efficiency with the present number of cars. No extra wages would be entailed, as the wages are going on all the time. The only extra expense would be a little power needed to propel the car. The present system is not only an inconvenience to the public, but the cause of the trams losing a great number of passengers. The other day I just missed one car at Subiaco, and while I was standing at the corner of Nicholson-road waiting for the next car, no fewer than 42 people who came up to catch the tram disappeared in three or four charabancs, which came along and picked them up.

Mr. Marshall: Who counted that number of people?

Mr. ANGELO: I counted them.

Mr. Marshall: What had you been drinking?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. ANGELO: I wish the hon. member would not judge others by himself. I feel certain he must have been indulging freely to make such an insane remark. I am trying to give the Minister a little helpful criticism. A great difference, I am sure, could be effected by running the trams continuously. The men themselves do not want to stop at the terminus. I have spoken to them about it, and they said, "We would prefer to be ordered to turn round and go straight back, because then we would not have our cars overcrowded as they are at the present time. The overcrowding makes it very difficult to collect fares, especially when people are hanging on to the straps." Another thing is the unnecessary stops that are allowed. Take the stop at Sandover's in Hay-street. One never sees more than two or three people get into the car there.

Mr. Heron: The trams do not stop there every time.

Mr. ANGELO: I have seen five or six motor cars hung up because the tram stopped there to pick up one or two people. It is only a walk of 100 yards or so from Sandover's to one of the corners.

Hon. G. Taylor: The tram ought to be shifted out of the road of the motor cars.

Mr. ANGELO: Take the stop at Ventnor Avenue. There are three buildings between Ventnor Avenue and Outram-street, and yet there are three stops within a distance of 105 yards. I have spoken to several inspectors about this matter, and they acknowledge that the Ventnor Avenue

stop is ridiculous. I have said to them, "Why don't you report it?" The reply was, "Oh, an important officer of the Railway Department lives in this street, and that accounts for the stop." Fancy three stops in 105 yards, and one of them an unnecessary stop! As a result, hundreds of people are delayed in getting to their homes.

The Minister for Lands: You just walk a 105 yards without overcoat or umbrella in pouring rain!

Mr. ANGELO: Then there is the Emerald Hill Terrace stop. There are four buildings between Emerald Hill Terrace and Havelock-street.

Mr. Teesdale: That is a ridiculous stop.

Mr. ANGELO: Absolutely; and I am told by the conductors that even worse stops can be shown at Victoria Park. Another point is that the travelling public have unfortunately been allowed to fall into very casual habits as regards getting in and out of the cars. Only this morning I saw one old lady get up from her seat and shake hands with three or four people while the conductor held up the tram. If we can get rid of those long, unnecessary delays at the terminus, and some of these unnecessary stops—

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The charabancs stop at those places.

Mr. ANGELO: No. If, in addition, we could educate the people into hurrying up a bit, we could obtain at least 50 per cent. more efficiency from the cars than we get now. Not only that, but the trams would secure far more passengers than they do under the present lax system with long intervals between cars. The charabancs pick up the passengers, and are becoming far more popular than the trams.

Mr. Kennedy: That is because they stop anywhere.

Mr. ANGELO: I feel perfectly certain that much good would result from the adoption of these suggestions. The trams are so unpopular at present—

The Minister for Railways: They are not unpopular.

Mr. ANGELO: They are. People tell me they would far sooner travel by charabanc because they cannot get seats in the trams.

The Minister for Railways: If you heard the deputations that come to my office from people wanting trams and not charabancs you would wake up.

Mr. ANGELO: I wish the Minister travelled along that portion of the tramway service with which I am familiar. He would find that seldom would he be able to get a seat, because his chivalry would compel him to get up and make room for a lady, as nearly every male passenger has to do. I feel perfectly certain that if the suggestions I have put forward were adopted, 50 per cent. more efficiency would be got out of the cars. The tramway system is being extended, and therefore more cars will be needed. In the circumstances it is up to the service to get as much use as they possibly can out of the cars they have at present.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.59]: There is no doubt that the crop forecast of 28½ million bushels will be realised. The Railway Department will be taxed to the fullest extent in handling the harvest, and I was pleased to hear from the Minister of the steps that are being taken by the department to cope with that heavy and increasing traffic. The State can well congratulate itself upon the increase in traffic. When the Government introduced the limitation of the period during which superphosphate may be despatched at the lower rate to the country, they did so with the object of insuring that the superphosphate should be despatched during the wheat season so as to provide loading for trucks that were going to the country empty to handle the harvest, and bring the wheat to the ports. With the prospects of a big harvest, the wheat transport business is bound to be increased. If the present Government are in power after March next, I hope the Minister will see that the time during which superphosphates can be carried at the cheap rate is extended.

The Minister for Railways: The farmers will be well advised to get their superphosphate supplies early.

Mr. Lindsay: We ordered it, but the railways could not truck it.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That was the position.

Mr. Lindsay: We did what the Minister suggests, but we could not get it.

The Minister for Railways: There were three weeks of wet weather during which supplies could not be forwarded. We have sufficient sheets now to cover all the trucks that will be used.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But there was another difficulty; the companies were short of supplies.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That was so. With the increased area under crop, and the added recognition of the value of superphosphates, the companies may not be able to meet the supplies this year, during the short period the cheaper rates are available. If the wheat season increases so that it will take a few months longer to transport the harvest, I cannot see any disadvantage that will accrue to the Government in allowing superphosphates to be carried at the cheaper rate while the wheat is being handled. I am sure the Minister will take a reasonable view of the position.

The Minister for Railways: I think we have, and this year we extended the period longer than in any preceding year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But there is the manufacturers' difficulty to be considered as well, because they have to get their sheds empty in order to provide for the next season's requirements.

Mr. Lindwsay: That may be a matter of a month or so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And that will not effect the railways.

The Minister for Railways: We have a flat rate, and the people can take advantage of it any time they like.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If trucks have to be run back to the country empty in order to pick up wheat, the Minister might very well continue the cheaper rates as long as is necessary to meet the requirements of the farmers. The Minister knows the difficulty that was experienced last year. Another matter to which I desire to draw attention relates to the increased land tax and the promised corresponding reduction in freight. I find it difficult to ascertain from the departmental reports whether effect was given to that promise. So far as I can see, freights are reduced to the extent of £45,000. I have read the report of the Commissioner of Taxation, and I find that for the year 1922-23 the land tax amounted to £79,983, not accounting for refunds; in 1923-24, it amounted to £71,449; in 1924-25, to £113,877, and in 1925-26, to £145,830. So that in the last two years the taxation on land was increased by £74,381.

The Minister for Railways: You know the explanation of that as well as anyone else.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Of course I do. The land tax was doubled. On the one hand, however, we have reductions in railway freights amounting to £45,000 and I wish to see whether the Railway Department show in their returns that the promise conveyed to the farmers has been given effect to. I wish to ascertain whether the department have received the benefit of the amount by which the land tax has been increased.

The Minister for Railways: We do not get anything from that.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The railway rates were supposed to be reduced by an amount equivalent to the increase in the land tax.

The Minister for Railways: You know, of course, that the increased area under cultivation accounted for the increased return.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I hope that the Minister wishes to see that the undertaking to reduce freights according to the promise I have mentioned, is given effect to. From the standpoint of departmental instructions, I notice that the Commissioner of Railways, in his latest report, refers to the rapid progress of the institutes, and says—

This institution continued to make rapid progress, and with the expansion of railway business and increased number of employees, the existing facilities are fully taxed to meet the requirements of the institute's increased membership.

He goes on to say—

The country membership increased from 1,600 to 2,000 during the past two years, while the combined enrolments for the past 12 months total 6,360, compared with 6,000 in 1924-25. There is ample scope for the enlargement of activities, and to permit of this being done, additional buildings are required, particularly at Narrogin and Merredin.

The Minister for Railways: That is right.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: This matter has been brought before the Minister and Parliament for three years in succession, and I hope some effort will be made to give effect to the Commissioner's recommendation. More especially should this be done in view of the importance of some of the country railway depots to which the Commissioner has referred. I trust, therefore, his recommendations will be given effect to as soon as possible.

The Minister for Railways: I am quite sympathetic; it is merely a matter of money.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In the country areas we have a large number of men who wish to avail themselves of the benefits of classes and social advantages provided at the Railway institutes. In view of the great importance of the two centres mentioned as railway depots, Narrogin and Merredin, and of the fact that about 200 railway men are located in each of those towns, the question is one of urgency. At any rate, the provision of the institutes has been recommended by the Commissioner in his reports for three years running, and I hope the Minister will be able to give effect to his desires.

[*Mr. Angelo took the Chair.*]

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.8]: In Victoria considerable progress has been made regarding the electrification of the metropolitan and suburban lines. Recently I endeavoured to obtain from the Minister some particulars regarding this important question, and on the 11th August I asked the following question:—

(1) Has the question of the electrification of the suburban and hills railway service been considered from the financial and operating points of view? (2) Is it practicable from these viewpoints? (3) Will he give an approximate estimate of the capital involved in the suggested change over.

Of course I know this is a big question that will involve considerable work. In his reply the Minister said that from an operating standpoint the change over was practicable, but the financial aspect regarding the hills railway had not been definitely determined. He told me that the cost would be over £1,000,000. I thought that it would be in excess of that amount.

The Minister for Lands: That is not much; we have plenty of money!

The Minister for Railways: It is just a matter of a bare million!

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope Ministers will not treat a question of £1,000,000 in a light manner.

The Minister for Lands: Some members seem to treat it in that way. It is simply a matter, according to them, of merely picking it up out of the sea in buckets.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not think I referred to it in such a flippant manner. In view of the competition by the charabancs, and being desirous of making comparisons I instituted inquiries with the object of ascertaining the cost of electrifying the metropolitan and suburban railways in this State.

The aggregate track distance between Perth-Fremantle, Perth-Chidloes, Perth-Armadale, and Perth-Karragullen is 179 miles 59 chains. With the view to making an estimate of the cost, I wrote to the chairman of the Victorian Railway Commissioners, asking what had been the capital cost of converting their lines and providing the necessary equipment. The answer I received stated that the mileage of the electrified railway system was, route miles 184, track miles 371; and that approximately the capital cost of the scheme, including essential equipment had been £6,400,000. On that basis the cost of making the change-over in Western Australia would be approximately £3,100,810.

Mr. Lambert: That comparison gets you nowhere, for the gauge here is very different from that in Victoria.

Mr. SAMPSON: It gives us a figure to work on, and we are now competent to consider whether it would be practicable to make the change-over.

The Minister for Works: Does that figure include the power house?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes.

The Minister for Works: We have that already.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, but unfortunately its generating capacity is already at the limit.

The Minister for Railways: No. We have just put in an additional 60 per cent. capacity.

Mr. SAMPSON: I understand that. I hope it will not stop at that, because when the cables that are asked for are provided, very much of that additional 60 per cent. will have been consumed, and we shall have still to consider the electrification of our railways, starting de novo.

The Minister for Lands: Is it worth while considering at all, seeing that a lot of our agricultural areas have no railways of any sort? It is only a waste of time talking about it.

Mr. Lambert: It is a good electioneering stunt, anyhow.

Mr. SAMPSON: The providing of this money would involve an interest charge of, say, 5 per cent. and a sinking fund of 1 per cent., or a total of £186,000 per annum. It is, of course, a very heavy cost, but it is of considerable interest. I hope the Minister will be good enough to make a rough calculation and give us his opinion of the approximate figure involved. I congratulate the department on having instituted the cash-

on-delivery system, but I feel that greater publicity must be given to it if the full fruits of its adoption are to be secured. I have previously referred to the need for improved lights on our railway locomotives. The lights on many of the engines are so poor that on wet nights one might be within a stone's throw of an approaching locomotive without seeing it. Better lights are necessary for the safety of the public, for many barriers or other protective device. I know that some cost would be involved in improving the lights, but I am sure the expenditure would be justified. One evening I attended the Minister for Agriculture on a visit to Armadale. Coming back we noted how close we were to an approaching train before it was visible through the rain. No reference has been made to-night to the projected railway south of the Swan. I hope the Minister will make some comment touching this railway. The difficulty of moving our increasingly heavy harvest has been referred to on many occasions.

Mr. Lambert: It has been flogged to death.

Mr. SAMPSON: If a railway were constructed along the south side of the river it would not only be possible to move that wheat much easier, but the line would open up a comparatively big area of reasonably good country and would obviate the necessity for passing all the traffic through the bottle-neck of the Perth railway yards. Moreover, the position recently created by the collapse of the North Fremantle bridge could never recur. One does not require much imagination to visualise what the construction of that railway would mean. The need for transport facilities is increasing, and before many years have passed the South Swan railway will be essential. I wish to make a few remarks on the financial position of the railways. The working expenses in 1925-26 amounted to £2,509,049. In the previous year the working expenses totalled £2,355,087. Although the actual tonnage carried was reduced from 3,284,915 in 1924-25 to 3,237,496 in 1925-26, the expense of transporting that tonnage increased by £153,962. Thus although the tonnage was reduced, the expenditure increased by a large sum. Again the ton mileage in 1924-25 totalled 277,189,629 tons, and that was reduced in 1925-26 to 272,611,089. I am surprised that the cost of operating the service should have increased to such a marked extent. I hope that the railway operations next year will show an improvement. The

net loss last year amounted to £31,982—

Mr. Lindsay: There was no loss last year.

Mr. SAMPSON: Or a difference compared with the previous year of £222,547. Those are big figures. I hope the Government will give serious consideration to the matter of constructing a railway on the south side of the river.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [10.23]: The Minister dealt with the matter of handling wheat, and said it was intended to extend the time usually taken to shift the harvest. I hope the Minister will give some consideration to the users of the railways as well as to the Railway Department. The Railway Department have a monopoly of the business, but the people who are growing the wheat are entitled to some consideration. The Minister spoke of extending the period till June. We know that in the past a good deal of wheat has been handled in the month of June, but the wheat carried on the railways in June has been wheat for local milling purposes. If the Minister intends to make us ship wheat in June, it will be detrimental to the railways and to the State.

The Minister for Railways: We shall shift it as fast as we possibly can.

Mr. LINDSAY: If the Minister intends to do that, he will have to build a lot more trucks. I have figures taken from the report of the Railway Department showing that the increase in the number of trucks for the year was 181. When we realise that the production of wheat this year is eight million bushels in excess of that of last year, we must expect serious congestion. The present Minister is like all other Ministers for Railways—he is stuck for cash. Apparently he does not realise how rapidly production, together with the volume of general traffic has increased. Taking the wheat traffic alone in 1922-23, the production was 13 million bushels. This year we expect a harvest of 29 million bushels. Thus our production will have doubled in four years, but the number of trucks has not been doubled. I foresee great difficulty in the handling of the harvest this season.

The Minister for Works: Wheat is not the only commodity that suffers from a shortage of rolling stock. Timber also has suffered.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am aware that timber could not be shifted owing to the trucks being required for the transport of wheat.

The question of trucks is a serious one, and if it is at all possible, more money should be provided to increase the number.

The Minister for Railways: We have provided four times as much money annually as the previous Government did, so we are doing our share. I should like to make it eight times as much.

Mr. LINDSAY: The position regarding trucks may be expressed in this way: At the end of June, 1925, we had the equivalent of 12,174 four-wheeled trucks, and in June, 1926, the number was 12,355, an increase of 181. In the number of locomotives a decrease of 10 is shown. I cannot understand why that should be. Evidently there are 10 locomotives fewer this year than there were last year. In proportion to the increased production, an increase of 181 trucks is altogether too small.

The Minister for Railways: I told you we were trying to increase our trucks by 400 or 500, but could not get the material.

Mr. LINDSAY: I mention this fact because I am convinced serious trouble will be experienced in handling the harvest this season. If wheat for export is to be handled as late as June, it will mean that all the wheat at the country sidings will have to be covered. Again, if shipments are delayed, the payments to the farmers will be delayed. The farmers who put their wheat into the pool, through not being able to sell as early as usual, will have to find more interest on the money, incur greater cost for dunage, and for covering the wheat at the sidings, and run the risk of damage through weevil. Although there were 145,000 bags of wheat in the State at the 30th June last, it was held for local milling.

The Minister for Railways: The millers did not get enough wheat to keep the mills going.

Mr. LINDSAY: That was the fault of the millers, and not of the pool. The millers have to state the quantities they require, and the pool keeps those quantities for them.

The Minister for Railways: In the interests of the State there should be some more satisfactory arrangement.

Mr. LINDSAY: Now that the Minister has mentioned the matter, let me explain the position. The wheat buyers used to purchase wheat in December, January, and February. They paid for it at the time; the farmer got his money, and so was able to finance himself for the whole year. Nowadays, however, the pool is really

financing the millers, who buy, not in December, January and February, but from day to day. We fill the mills with wheat, but the millers pay for it only when they grist it. Naturally there is a limit to the time that wheat growers can hold wheat for local consumption, and we say that if it is held till the end of June, it is a fair thing. By that time the millers must purchase their requirements for the remainder of the year. It is not fair to ask the wheat growers to finance the State for wheat required for flour not only for local consumption but for export. The matter is one that rests entirely with the millers, who are on a far better wicket to-day than they ever have been.

The Minister for Railways: They are pursuing a very short-sighted policy.

Mr. LINDSAY: Let me tell the Minister how the wheat growers suffered in one year. We asked the millers how much wheat they wanted, and they told us. Unfortunately the price of wheat dropped. The pool was loaded with millions of bushels of wheat, which had practically been sold to the millers. But the millers could not take it and we had to sell it on a falling market, thus losing a good many pence per bushel. We would not do that again, because we have now made a different agreement. Many deputations have waited upon the Minister with regard to the freight on fertilisers. Farmers who bought manure for delivery within the allotted time, the end of March, were unable to get it until after the time had expired.

The Minister for Railways: There was a shortage of tarpaulins at the time, but we have now overcome that difficulty.

Mr. LINDSAY: Many train loads of manure have gone into the country without any tarpaulins over the trucks.

The Minister for Railways: Not in the wet weather.

Mr. LINDSAY: That is so. An increasing quantity of manure is required in the country districts. We are ordering more for the next harvest than has ever been ordered before. There will probably be greater delays this year than there were last. We have tried to arrange with the superphosphate companies to take all the orders they can get and give the farmers a certain proportion of those orders in the early part of the year, but they have not been able to carry out the arrangement. We are continually extending the time for the

carting of the wheat, for the idea of getting cheap freight on superphosphate is to use that as backloading for the trucks. That being so I do not see why the time limit should not be extended for a month. It has always been extended for a fortnight. As we are extending the time for the handling of the harvest, it is only right that the limit should be extended for a month.

The Minister for Railways: We extended it last year longer than ever before.

Mr. LINDSAY: The Minister ought to have dealt with the question of regrading. That is money well spent. A regrading job has been done on the line that goes through my electorate. Although wages were increased and hours were reduced there was so much discontent on the job that there was a strike amongst the workers and nothing was done for six months.

The Minister for Railways: They were casual workers, not ordinary railway workers.

Mr. LINDSAY: They were getting well paid, but the job was held up for six months. It seems a waste of money to partly finish a job, and then let it stand over for six or seven months.

The Minister for Lands: That is a question of loan money, and does not come within the scope of these Estimates.

Mr. LINDSAY: No doubt there are many things we would not be allowed to say if the Minister for Lands had his way. The job is nearly finished now. The regrading will increase the number of trucks that can be hauled over the lines, and also increase the use to which the trucks can be put. This means that more work can be done by the same number of trucks.

The Minister for Railways: That is so.

Mr. LINDSAY: No doubt there will be a shortage of trucks this year, notwithstanding the additional 181 trucks that have been built. They will not be sufficient for the increase in production.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [10.35]: In the handling of big crowds the system adopted by the Railway Department is capable of considerable improvement. On Show Day the railways handle an enormous number of people, but instead of fares being reduced, they are increased. People who book from Perth or Fremantle have to pay the increased charge, but those who book at intermediate stations are carried at the ordinary fare. The department might well reduce the fares on such occa-

sions, when they are handling people in wholesale numbers. I believe it is the custom to charge apprentices on a sliding scale for their tickets. An apprentice who receives up to 12s. 6d. a week pays quarter rates; up to 25s. he pays half rates, and up to 35s. he pays three-quarter rates. I know of a girl who received an increase of 11d. per week, which was according to the basic wage scale. She found, however, that she lost money because her ticket immediately went up from 8s. to 14s. a month. This was very hard upon a girl who was earning only 12s. 6d. a week.

The Minister for Railways: The line must be drawn somewhere.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The department should extend the privilege of quarter rates to apprentices receiving more than 12s. 6d. a week.

The Minister for Railways: An ordinary child pays half rates, while an apprentice pays only quarter rates.

Mr. SLEEMAN: An apprentice who receives only 12s. 6d. is little more than a child and if the wage is 13s. the ticket is at half rates.

The Minister for Railways: A child of seven or eight pays half rates.

Hon. G. Taylor: What age is the apprentice you are speaking of?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Between 16 and 18.

Hon. G. Taylor: That would not be a juvenile.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I am referring to boys and girls of 15 or 16. If they receive 13s. a week they have to pay half rates. Some concession should be made to these young people. The present rates are hard upon them and their parents. Some better system of running trains in the metropolitan area should be inaugurated. During the middle of the day we see heavy lumbering trains running backwards and forwards. If light trains were run the fares could be reduced and the railways could get back some of the traffic they have lost. At present we are driving traffic into the hands of charabanc and taxi cab owners.

The Minister for Railways: We did that, and reduced the fares by half. The return fares were 50 per cent. cheaper than the singles fares.

Hon. G. Taylor: And still the public preferred the charabancs.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Fares were not reduced by 50 per cent. The railways stipulated that people should travel only during certain hours of the day. People sometimes got

back to Perth or Fremantle a few minutes after the time had expired, and were called upon to pay excess on their tickets. This led to a lot of dissatisfaction.

The Minister for Railways: That was when the busy time started.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Some of the trains, at all events in the metropolitan area, might be of only one class. At present, if one wants to travel first-class, one can get a compartment to oneself, whereas the second-class compartments are overcrowded. I hope that the Minister, in replying, will indicate whether it is probable that the cost of apprenticeship tickets will be reduced, and whether there will be a revision of the present system of increasing fares on gala days, when the worker and his family go out for a day's enjoyment. At such times the fares ought rather to be reduced.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [10.41]: I have paid close attention to what has been said about the handling of the harvest. In conversation recently with a member of the railways staff I was told that plans were now being prepared for handling the traffic during the next ten years. I suggested to the gentleman in question that with the present rate of increase in the State's wheat production it would not be long before bulk handling was established in Western Australia. About three years ago Mr. Sutton said we had to work for a harvest of 50,000,000 bushels, and that then we would be compelled to adopt bulk handling. I commend that consideration to the Minister and his officers, since it has a bearing on the question of truck building. Respecting the increases in freights which have taken place during the last ten years, members will find some interesting retrospective reading in the report of the Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister for Railways: We have all read that report.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do not read it to-night.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No. I shall not occupy more than an hour.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not threaten the Committee.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am not threatening the Committee, Sir. With regard to the loading of trucks, I was about to quote the increases from the departmental report; but hon. members say they have read it. The point is that the existing freight charges were fixed long before present conditions

existed. With the competition of motor traffic, the breaking strain has nearly been reached in increase of freights. The Minister for Lands has declared emphatically that we must have more railways. The great difficulty, however, is the low cost of motor transport as compared with the cost of transport over substantially built and equipped railways. I have heard it stated by a man who uses the road in conveying wool to the metropolis that he can load a 5-ton lorry up to eight tons, and that he does so. This suggests that the overloading of our roads is a matter for serious consideration. Considering what motor traffic contributes to the upkeep of roads—

The Minister for Railways: That has nothing to do with the railways.

The CHAIRMAN: Motor traffic has nothing to do with these estimates.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Commissioner of Railways has had addresses prepared and articles printed and wireless calls issued, by way of appeal to the commercial section of the community on the subject of the wool traffic; and the result is that the wool traffic of the department, at all events, has proved most satisfactory. It is a good thing that our people realise the unfairness of giving their high-class traffic to the motors while putting the low-class on the railways. I have to bring forward one or two parochial matters. The Minister has already indicated the position regarding Merredin station. At Burracoppin, however, a great deal of stuff has been lost by theft. Burracoppin is not what it was in the old days; it now has an hotel, three or four stores, a post office, and so forth, and last season it sent away 75,000 bags of wheat. The thieving at the railway station, by whomsoever done, is of an extensive nature.

Member: Is there not a station master at Burracoppin?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Someone is on during the daytime. There cannot be a full-time station master, because Mr. White, a son of Dr. White of Fremantle, tells me that he and others have lost considerable quantities of goods. He has requested me to urge the Minister to appoint a station master for Burracoppin. I may point out that since the erection of a shelter shed and the appointment of a caretaker at Boddalin, no losses of goods have occurred there. I regret to hear that the Commissioner of Railways has had to take leave of absence on account of ill-health. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the

Commissioner has undoubtedly proved a good man in his job. I recall with a good deal of satisfaction that I supported and approved his appointment at the time it was made. It must be admitted that Colonel Pope has carried out the duties of the position most satisfactorily. In a huge concern like the Railway Department the increase of costs year after year makes the earning of a profit increasingly difficult. In adopting re-grading and other means of reducing expenses the Commissioner is, I am sure, proceeding on right lines.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 16th November, 1926.

	PAGE
Question: State Insurance Office, cost, etc. ...	2161
Leave of absence ...	2161
Bills: Reserves (No. 2), 2a., passed ...	2162
State Insurance, Com. ...	2162
Timber Industry Regulation, 2a. ...	2173

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

QUESTION--STATE INSURANCE OFFICE, COST, ETC.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:—1, What is the total cost of establishing the State Insurance Office? 2, what is the total amount of premiums received by the State insurance of workers' compensation, from the inception of the office to date? 3, What is the amount of premiums received for miners' phthisis only, from the inception of the office to date? 4, What is the amount of losses paid and outstanding—(a) for workers' compensation business only, including medical and hospital fees; (b) for miners' phthisis, including medical and hospital fees? 5, Is the State insurance officer covering hailstone risks for I.A.B. clients? 6, If not, how is this class of business being done?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The total expenditure of the office, exclusive of claims, up to 31st October, 1926, was £779 13s. 9d. In addition to this sum, a further liability has been incurred in the purchase of furniture for which accounts have not yet been received, but which is estimated to cost £150. 2, Total premiums received on account of general workers' compensation business to 31st October, 1926, £9,520 14s. 1d. 3, Total premiums received on account of miners' phthisis insurance to 31st October, 1926, £10,014 12s. 8d. As most of the premiums are paid in monthly or quarterly instalments, the above amounts represent the sums actually received, not the total premium income for the year. 4, Amounts paid in claims and medical expenses to 31st October, 1926—(a) workers' compensation business, £4,214 9s. 4d.; (b) miners' phthisis, £246 13s. 5d. It is not possible, without considerable trouble, to estimate the liability on account of outstanding claims. 5, No. 6, By the Industries Assistance Board. The hailstone risk is covered in conjunction with the fire risk, under the powers conferred by Section 9 of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1915. The hailstone insurance through the Board fund is optional on the part of the settlers, but a greater proportion of settlers have arranged such insurances with the Board than in previous years effected insurances with the incorporated companies. Possibly this satisfactory result may be caused by the fact that this year the companies are declining to grant rebates, whilst the I.A.B. is continuing the practice of allowing them, thus conserving to the I.A.B. settlers a very valuable concession. The settlers are also aware that whilst the total premiums previously paid amount to about £250,000, the losses have been about £101,000. The insurance fund so formed is administered by the Government Actuary.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles (for Hon. E. H. Gray) leave of absence granted to Hon. W. H. Kitson (West) for six consecutive sittings on the ground of urgent private business.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson leave of absence granted to Hon. A. Lovekin (Metropolitan) for six consecutive sittings on the ground of urgent private business.