

Legislative Assembly,*Tuesday, 16th November, 1909.*

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Regulations of the Fremantle Harbour Trust.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of the Upper Blackwood roads board; 2, Map showing proposed Goomalling-Wongan Hills Railway; 3, Map showing proposed Dowerin-Merredin Railway; 4, Map showing proposed Boyup-Kojonup Railway.

By the Minister for Mines: Papers relating to the employment of foreigners on mines.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1909-10.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 12th November; Mr. Daglish in the Chair.

Treasury Department and Administrative Branches (Hon. N. J. Moore, Treasurer).

Vote—*Literary and Scientific Grants*, £12,153.

Item, University Extension Lectures, Perth, £100:

Mr. BATH: Would the Treasurer inform the Committee whether under this vote provision would be made for the practice which had ruled with regard to the recent University extension lectures delivered in Western Australia for giving a series of lectures at Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Further down it would be seen that provision had been made in the previous year for a grant to a Kalgoorlie institution, but it had since been withdrawn from the Estimates. Would it be for Perth exclusively, or would it cover the other centres? It seemed that the lecturers were brought either from the United Kingdom or the Eastern States,

and it would be false economy to confine their visits to the metropolitan centre.

The PREMIER: As the Committee were aware, for a considerable time past the sum of £200 had been provided on the Estimates to pay the expenses in connection with the University extension lectures, and in the past the lecturers not only visited the goldfields, but on several occasions had proceeded to other centres as well. This year the vote had been reduced to £100, and it would be necessary in consequence, instead of two professors coming to the State, of arranging for the visit of only one, and there was no doubt that the lecturer would visit Kalgoorlie and deliver lectures there as well.

Mr. KEENAN: The Treasurer was labouring under a misconception with regard to the vote. Although a sum of money was made available on the Estimates it did not cover the expenses of the lecturer when he proceeded to the goldfields; every penny of the expenses incurred was provided by the people themselves. The sum made available at the present time would be only sufficient to provide for the expense of bringing a lecturer to Perth, and it was a delusion to suppose that the money would cover anything else. The Treasurer should inform the Committee whether he was prepared to reconsider the advisableness of making a sum available to cover the cost of delivering lectures outside the metropolitan area.

Mr. BATH: A protest should be entered against this particular form of economy. The resources of Western Australia had not been reduced to such a low ebb that we could not afford a sum of £200 which was originally provided on the Estimates for the purpose of University extension lectures. The visits of the lecturers and the subjects that they had dealt with had been the only means by which the educational development in scientific and other matters had been brought within the reach of the ordinary population of Western Australia. We talked about giving the people opportunities for education; here was one which was being availed of by the people in increasing numbers as the years passed,

and immediately there became a demand for economy—and a demand which was rightly put forward in some directions—the Government instantly replied with a reduction in the very item which should be the last to be reduced. We had no University and there were no State secondary schools, but the fact that we were depleting the amount for lectures which were being provided as a substitute was not a creditable reflection of our interest in educational matters in Western Australia. His desire was to disabuse the minds of people in the State, if there were any, who held the opinion that we had not sufficient resources or a population sufficiently interested to provide the amounts necessary for legitimate education work; and he objected to the reduction of this vote, and to the proposal to deny any advantage to the goldfields or other centres that showed sufficient interest in university extension work.

The PREMIER: No attempt would be made to deprive the outside centres. As a matter of fact the State provided the various lecturers with free passes in order to enable them to visit the goldfields and other centres. Professor Bottomley visited Northam and other centres, and so did Professor McCallum and Professor Henderson though the last named, having been brought to the State by the Swan River Institute, was not paid out of this item. It was understood that it was part of their engagements for these professors to visit the different centres. He (the Premier) was prepared to offer every facility to see that those centres which were prepared to subsidise the expenditure at all would receive every advantage offered by visits from any professors or lecturers.

Item, Perth Museum and Art Gallery. £3,500:

Mr. KEENAN: There was a reduction of £300 in the item this year. With the establishment of an art gallery and museum in Perth he was in full sympathy; but when it became a question of saving money, which was very much needed in various directions where direct services were rendered to the people, these institutions should be brought down

to the bare sum necessary to keep them in statu quo. Money should be provided, not for the purchase of new pictures or adding to the Museum, but simply for maintenance for some time to come. Would not the sum provided exceed the amount absolutely required for mere maintenance?

The PREMIER: The committee controlling the institution claimed the sum provided was absolutely necessary to keep the institution going. The grant had been reduced from £4,500 in 1906-7 to £3,500 this year. During the last year the attendance was 81,568, or an increase of nearly 50 per cent., showing how the public appreciated the educational opportunities provided. Among the visitors were classes from the training school and from public and private schools. During the year no less than 944 different objects were donated to the museum. It was practically impossible to keep going, according to the director, with a less sum than the amount now provided. The strongest possible protests had been put up by the committee against the reduction already made. They strongly resented the reduction appearing on this year's Estimates, and claimed that it was practically impossible for them to carry on even with last year's vote.

Mr. WALKER: The Public Library and Museum were necessary institutions, and the more they were availed of the more the State advantaged, but at the same time the grant of £3,500, compared with the sum put on the Estimates for these institutions for the rest of the State, was exorbitant, while there was only a reduction of £300 for the Museum as compared with the reduction of £400 for the institutions for the whole of the State. It seemed that this grant would cover more than working expenses. It was extravagant to imagine that £3,500 was requisite. No doubt we had one of the finest libraries in the Commonwealth. It was well furnished with a fine class of literature, but there was stock on the shelves that would adequately serve the State for a year or two without fresh purchases. No doubt the Art Gallery and Museum were valuable, but they must be considered more or less as luxuries, and

while we should be proud of our achievements to date, there was no need to make additions. Everything should be eliminated not required for the mere purpose of maintaining the institution in its present condition. If the Premier would give details as to what were the actual costs, members could judge as to whether the pruning knife could be used. As for the protests made by the committee controlling the institution, if the Government placed £5,000 on the Estimates the committee would ask for more; and no doubt the money would be wisely spent in literature, art, or scientific purchases; but in the circumstances of the State we should not go too far with expenditure on an institution of this character.

The PREMIER: The vote was £405 less than was spent last year. The expenditure was made up of salaries, £1,132; wages, £978; zoology, £254; geology and mineralogy, £103; art (purchases), £509; arts and craft, £58; books, £65; furniture, £196; charges, £409. In regard to the furniture, it had to be remembered that 944 specimens were presented to the institution and had to be provided for, and there was also a lot of stuff stowed away in cellars not visible to the eye of the visitor prior to the extensions that had to be brought out and placed on shelves. The charge included petty cash, £52; kerosene, etcetera, £33; sanitary, £21; light, water, firewood, £57; repairs and cases, £110; telephones and extra light, £34; stationery, £15; preservatives, £24; lectures, £26; fire insurance, £6. It would be seen that with £400 less this year, the committee would not have much to spare. The operations last year wound up with an overdraft of £84. In the circumstances members would see there was very little to spare. The expenditure in South Australia was £7,260; in New South Wales, £11,000, and in Victoria, £21,789. Members should not lose sight of the fact that so many objects of interest and curiosity were presented to the institution by different people. This entailed expenditure in connection with show cases and in the direction of the labour necessary to keep the specimens preserved and in order.

Mr. BATH: As a member of the Art Gallery and Museum committee he had had an opportunity of going into the question of expenditure as minutely as possible. Knowing the feeling of members of the House in regard to these votes in relation to the existing condition of the finances, the committee had gone into the matter of expenditure in great detail, and had endeavoured to keep it down to the lowest possible limit consistent with the proper maintenance of the institution. There was a reduction of £300 on the vote of last year, and £1,000 as compared with the vote for 1905-6. There was a matter not appearing in the details, and that was that a number of the departments which had previously done certain work for the institute were now charging for it. At one time when the vote was £4,500, and up to the last twelve months, the Works Department supplied lighting and firewood to the Museum, paid the sanitary charges and provided water free of charge, and also paid for the cleaning of the numerous windows. Now, however, the department said they would not continue to carry out that work unless they were paid for it. Consequently this meant an additional tax on the Museum in order to make the receipts meet the expenditure required to keep up the institution. Since matters at the institution had been better arranged, and more space provided for exhibits previously kept in the cellars, a large amount of additional work was entailed on the attendants, and therefore the committee could not see where it was possible to reduce expenditure in respect to the staff. There were 63,485 square feet of plate glass in the institution which had to be kept in order. Next to Queensland, Western Australia was reputed to be the worst State for destructive insects. These pests attacked the bills of the birds and the skins of the various animals exhibited, with the result that it was a standing source of anxiety to keep the exhibits free from their depredations. In addition to works of art purchased a large number were presented to the Art Gallery, and were not always framed, with the result that the funds of the institution had to be expended in framing them. The vote of £3,500 for this year

would be insufficient to carry out all the additional works now necessary. It would be unwise to say that no money must be provided for the purchase of additional pictures, as at times an opportunity was obtained of purchasing works of art at a reasonable price, which added greatly to the attractiveness of the institution. At all events a certain portion of the money would have to be set apart for the framing of the pictures presented to the Art Gallery. The item of books for the Museum and Art Gallery had to be reduced this year by more than one-half. Then there was the question of furniture, which included the various stands needed for the exhibits. Naturalists from all over the world frequently presented valuable exhibits to the Museum, and it was essential that these should be provided with proper stands. It appeared that naturalists were a particularly generous lot of men, and that, when collecting specimens either for themselves or for the museums who engaged them, they never forgot museums in other parts of the world, and were ever ready to send them duplicate specimens. Our Museum profited much in that way and it was necessary that there should be proper stands for the exhibits.

Item—Mechanics' Institutes, Working Men's Associations, Art Societies, etc., £1,500.

Mr. JOHNSON: There was just cause for objection being raised as to the method of distribution of this money. He desired also to draw attention to the fact that whereas the item showed £1,850 as having been voted last year, the sum of £2,100 appeared on last year's Estimates. The latter sum, however, included £250 for a travelling library, whereas this sum was placed under a special item this year. The Estimates also showed the expenditure for last year to have been £1,890, whereas the *Public Accounts* showed that the actual expenditure was £2,140, or £250 in excess of the amount now set out. In the *Public Accounts* appeared a footnote stating that some of the £2,140 consisted of grants for 1907-8, but if one totalled up those grants it would be seen that they only amounted to £127; so roughly speaking £125 was expended for which there were no accounts. The method

of distribution was distinctly unfair. On another vote he intended to draw attention to that matter.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must wait until that item was reached.

Mr. JOHNSON: The remark applied to many other votes besides the one under discussion, for it was clear that some members and their constituencies received much more consideration than others. Where a lump sum was voted, the amount should be distributed fairly.

Mr. BATH: During the discussion on last year's Estimates he had pointed out that it was not a fair thing to pay the sum of £250 for a travelling library out of the vote for mechanics' institutes and other institutions of a like nature, as the fact of a travelling library being in existence had been claimed as one of the activities of the Public Library. It was unfair to those institutions trying to establish local libraries to have the item of £250 taken out, and an even further reduction, over and above that, of more than £100. He desired to protest against the reduction of the item from £1,850 to £1,500. The Minister for Works who was Treasurer last year, then said he would make a special item of the travelling library, but it was not understood for one moment that when separating the items he would reduce the vote for country mechanics' institutes by that amount. The sum of £1,500 for all the mechanics' institutes in the State was very paltry. Some of the institutions were doing excellent work with very small resources. With regard to land taxation and the institutions, there were hardships in some cases. For instance, the Kalgoorlie Institute and the Swan River Institute did not receive the benefit of the exemptions as they had shops and offices which were rated. The institutes had embarked on the investment with the object of deriving more income for carrying on their work. There was no real profit derived outside of that by the institutes. Other institutions of a similar kind let their halls at various times in order to derive an income also. That being so, if the same interpretation were applied to all of them, none of the institutions would

be able to receive exemption under the land tax. If there were to be exemptions, the fact that these people tried to increase their income in order to increase the facilities of their institutions should not be a reason for denying them those exemptions. The institute at Brown Hill, although the hall was but seldom let, and there were no shops attached, had been asked to pay land tax. This, too, notwithstanding the fact that they had not the fee simple of the land, but merely a perpetual lease. It seemed to be unfair to make this charge upon them.

The PREMIER: If the member for Guildford would look at the Estimates he would find that £1,850 plus £250 was £2,100. On the travelling libraries £250 had been spent, and £1,890 had been spent in connection with the various mechanics' institutes. This was the amount shown on No. 10 statement.

Mr. Johnson: It is shown that you spent some from last year's vote.

The PREMIER: Nothing could be spent from last year's vote.

Mr. Johnson: These lump sum votes are unsatisfactory. Lunbury got £35 out of it.

The PREMIER: As a matter of fact £2,140 had been expended. Presumably the claim had not been put in until after the financial year. As to what the Leader of the Opposition had said, the only case brought under his (the Premier's) notice was that of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute. The executive of that institution, after consulting a solicitor, had realised that they could not claim exemption, and had made application for a special grant to enable them to pay the land tax. Seeing, however, that it was only a matter of some £25, and in view of the fact that their membership subscriptions amounted to £800, and that they owned a property of very great value, he had not felt justified in acceding to their request. They had not even a free reading room.

Mr. Holman: Why give them a grant of a hundred pounds?

The PREMIER: They had got this grant under the scale. This year, however, he had made an alteration, and those

institutes which had free reading rooms were receiving £25 per cent. more on the scale than the institutes which did not provide public reading rooms.

Mr. Collier: What is the scale based on, membership?

The PREMIER: The scale was based on membership. This particular institute, although the subscription was only 12s. a year, provided the benefits of a reading room, a circulating library, a billiard room, and club room; and so, having regard to all these matters, he thought they were very liberally treated.

Mr. W. PRICE: Like other members, he would have to protest against the reduction of the vote for mechanics' institutes. If the Government had been desirous of providing the people outside of Perth with reasonable facilities for education the vote would not have been reduced. It was the institutions in the way-back centres which had to suffer. Although he had been connected with several of these mechanics' institutes, he had not yet known one outside of Perth that was not in financial difficulties. But while the Government were prepared to assist in every way the Perth Museum and other Perth institutions it was found that the institutes with which the workers of the State were associated were reduced by £390. The Government might reasonably have allowed the vote to stand unaltered.

Mr. WALKER: It was a misfortune that it was impossible to increase the vote shown in the Estimates. Members could protest, but the protests were of no avail. Year after year he had drawn attention to the paucity of expenditure in respect to these mechanics' institutes in small, distant towns. To reduce them still further was a species of meanness. It was not economy; it was cheese-paring. If it could be said that the Perth Museum could not stand any further reduction, what should be said in respect to the vast number of out-back institutions which found themselves in a similar position? Those who could least afford it were the most affected. It was not economy; it was disregard for the back country where these institutions served an exceedingly

valuable purpose, as indeed had been recognised by past Governments. There had not been a single case in which it could be said that extravagance had been indulged in in respect to these institutions. In another respect, too, the Government had been mean towards them. Formerly they had been supplied with copies of *Hansard* but they had now been cut off, and if they wanted the *Hansard* they had to pay for it. In every possible way were these institutes being discouraged. Were they close to Perth, and could interview the Premier, he ventured to think that they would not be so treated.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is imputing motives now; he must not do that.

Mr. WALKER: There was no desire whatever to impute motives.

The Premier: Institutes of not more than 25 members are not affected.

Mr. WALKER: But the general vote had been reduced by £300, which was an enormous reduction in proportion to the reduction made on the Perth Museum and Art Gallery vote. What the many institutions in Perth were to Perth, the one institute was to the small goldfields town in which it was situated. The Committee were powerless. The protest would not effect any result, yet it was wrong to these institutions as the amount appeared on the Estimates. He would like an assurance that next year if the present Government were in office, these outside institutions would get better treatment.

The PREMIER: No one regretted more than he did that the finances were in such a position that the Government had to refuse requests where often they would like to accede to the wishes of the people more especially in regard to out-back institutions. It was not proposed to reduce the small institutes; those having a membership up to 25 would receive the £7 10s. grant as at present. He did not feel at liberty to give an assurance more than to say that he hoped the finances would be in such a state next year that the Government would be able to deal more liberally than they had been able to do on the present Estimates.

Item, Zoological Gardens, £3,300.

Mr. KEENAN: Was the amount on the Estimates anything more than necessary for maintenance? Did it provide for purchases or improvements that could be deferred?

The PREMIER: From inquiries made he was satisfied that this amount was absolutely down to bedrock. It was necessary in order to keep the institution going that the amount on the Estimates should be retained without reduction. The committee this year were doing more in the way of popularising the institution than had been done previously. In order to afford an opportunity to children, and those living outside the metropolitan area to visit the Zoo, provision was made in the way of camping arrangements and water supplies in order to allow country children to visit the Zoo at a minimum of cost. He understood that next week 60 or 70 children were coming from one of the towns on the Great Southern Railway with a view to visiting the Zoo. This year, instead of charging for swing boats and rides on the ponies, the whole would be provided free of cost; those who came first being first served. The committee wished to make the institution as educational as possible. The officer who controlled the institution was most zealous, and was wrapped up in the work, which was carried out in the most economical manner.

Mr. KEENAN: Did the amount mean absolutely no more than wages, and salaries, and upkeep, or did it embrace some sums which were to be made available for extensions, improvements, or the purchase of animals, for any of these matters we could suspend expenditure and merely keep the gardens in the state they were in. He did not propose to criticise the services rendered or the intelligence of the officer-in-charge; but he wanted an assurance that the money was actually required for maintenance, that was keeping things as they were at present, preventing the animals from starving, or the grounds from deteriorating.

Mr. JOHNSON: This was a very wise expenditure, and he desired to pay a tribute to the director who was un-

doubtedly enthusiastic, and got the best results from the expenditure of the public funds. While doing this he wished to congratulate the member for Kalgoorlie in raising his voice in protest, because at last that member was fulfilling some of the election pledges which he gave the last time he and the hon. member met in contest.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not discuss that question.

Mr. JOHNSON: There had been considerable opposition to this item on the goldfields, largely on account of the able way in which the vote had been criticised by the member for Kalgoorlie. That member had tried to convince the people, and had succeeded in convincing them that he should be returned to protest against the expenditure of this money, consequently the hon. member was doing that which he promised: but he (Mr. Johnson) was inclined to think that he was doing it at the eleventh hour. Even at the eleventh hour it was desirable, but the hon. member was a member of a Government when he had greater power and should have raised his voice in protest then. He was glad the hon. member had at last stuck to some of his electioneering pledges.

The PREMIER: This amount represented absolutely bedrock. It cost a considerable amount for water and the upkeep of the animals. He (the Premier) had a very stormy interview with the director and several members of the committee when it was found that the amount had been reduced; but he had stood to his guns as far as the vote was concerned, because he realised at present it would be unwise to do more than maintain the gardens in the state they were at present.

Mr. KEENAN thanked the member for Guildford for speaking in the way he had, but he was under the impression that the hon. member had shaken the dust of Kalgoorlie off his feet long ago, and the people there had forgotten his existence. He (Mr. Keenan) never had but one view with regard to these institutions. If the public purse was in the position of having plenty of funds to spend in this direction they could be spent, but when it was a

matter of saving, then this was a direction in which we should economise. By being a member of a Government in no way altered that opinion. He took the assurance of the Premier that this sum was necessary for maintenance, but in connection with an item of this character the Premier should come to the House possessed of figures showing the sums paid in wages, the director's salary, and the other inevitable sources of expenditure.

The Premier: The balance-sheet had been laid on the Table.

Mr. KEENAN was not aware that the balance-sheet had been circulated.

The Premier: The hon. member would see how economical the committee had been in not having the balance-sheet printed.

Mr. SCADDAN: This was one of the papers that had been laid on the Table typewritten, and Parliament would have to spend money to have it printed. In regard to the item, so long as the Zoo was situated in South Perth, and the cost of reaching the gardens was so great, we should always have this state of affairs existing.

Mr. Hayward: There were 1,000 people there on Monday.

Mr. SCADDAN: That was a holiday, and out of a population of, he supposed, 70,000, only 1,000 had visited this institution. If these gardens had been situated in a place where they could have been reached without such a cost of getting there, there would have been more like 10,000 visiting the Zoological Gardens on a holiday. There was a fine bath available at the Zoological Gardens at the present time. The water which came from the bore contained certain properties that were a sure cure for rheumatism, and the public had not in the past been made aware of the fact that the water was available. Now, however, the fact was being made generally known. The Acclimatisation Committee had issued circulars to members of the Assembly stating that arrangements had been made with regard to children visiting the grounds during the summer months. That was certainly an advantage and the Fresh Air League

on the goldfields ought to be notified of the fact so that the children from those parts might also take advantage of the facilities offered.

Mr. W. PRICE: It was satisfactory to know that the gardens were to be made available to school children in the manner stated. There was no objection to the item, but he objected to items for outside centres being cut down while a corresponding reduction had not been made in the votes of institutions in the metropolis.

Mr. HOLMAN: What the Acclimatisation Committee were doing with regard to school children visiting the gardens was very satisfactory. Many years ago he suggested that greater facilities should be granted to school children to visit the Zoo, and at the present time it might be possible to go even further and admit all children entirely free of charge. If a parent desired to take two or three children to the gardens the expense became too heavy, and that fact prevented many people from taking their children there. If it were possible to bring about a reduction in the charges on the ferries the result would be even more satisfactory. With regard to the acclimatisation of fish and birds, one did not hear very much about that work, and it would be interesting to know what was going on. The member for Wellington had taken a keen interest in these matters, and he might be able to inform the Committee how the acclimatisation of fish in the portion of the State he represented had succeeded.

Mr. HAYWARD: The question of the acclimatisation of fish had interested him considerably. He introduced English perch to the Collie river some two years ago, and at the present time people were getting better perch there than he had ever seen in the old country. The member for Collie would be able to corroborate these statements. In other rivers in the Wellington district there were plenty of perch, and in a few years' time in all the rivers in the Southern districts there would be any quantity of English perch. The very small expenditure in connection with this work of acclimatisation had been fully justified and the results most gratifying.

Mr. JACOBY: It was to be hoped that the Government would help the society to carry on the work of acclimatisation, even at the expense of cutting down the cost of purchasing a few pictures for the Art Gallery. It should be considered sound economy to give to the society increased funds for carrying out their work.

Mr. HAYWARD: Any hon. member who had a river running through his constituency would on application be supplied with fish for acclimatisation purposes. They were available now in any quantity.

The PREMIER: The Acclimatisation Committee did not confine their operations to fish only. They had distributed fish, as would be seen in the report, in many rivers, and further than that, they had successfully acclimatised deer and antelope, and these were increasing steadily. It was gratifying to know that members considered that the work of the acclimatisation society was worthy of support.

Mr. BATH: There was always a risk of diseases, hitherto unknown in Australia, being introduced by the liberation of animals such as those mentioned by the Premier, and while so much zeal was being displayed in connection with the distribution of these animals it would be as well to be careful and know exactly what the outcome was going to be before the project was more widely embarked upon.

The PREMIER: The introduction of red deer and antelope into New Zealand was followed by good results.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Lithographic*, £5,021:

Mr. BATH: This vote had been referred to in previous years. As a separate branch the *Lithographic Department* should be abolished, and the work should be controlled by the Government Printing Office. This would save at least the three items. "*Government Lithographer*," "*clerk*," and "*caretaker and messenger*," and would be an actual economy. Had the Premier taken advice on the matter, because a saving ought to be effected without impairing efficiency?

The PREMIER: A report had been furnished by the Government Printer to the ex-Treasurer in regard to amalgamat-

ing the departments, but from the information gained the Minister was not of opinion a saving could be effected. At present the Public Service Commissioner and Mr. McGibbon were inquiring into the department. Years ago the Lands, Mines, and Works Departments had separate lithographic establishments, and the cost was £10,000 a year, but an amalgamation of the work effected a considerable saving. There was a large amount of confidential work carried out in the Lithographic Department, such as striking off stamps, railway tickets, and work of a similar nature involving special treatment. This was carried out in a highly satisfactory manner, and judging by a recent inspection the work seemed to be carried out very economically. At the same time he was prepared to extend inquiries into the department to ascertain whether any saving could be effected by carrying out the hon. member's suggestion.

Mr. BATH: If amalgamation were effected it would seem there would be no need for a Government Lithographer who presumably took no part in the actual work.

The PREMIER: The Government Lithographer was a technical man, a thorough good draftsman, and an expert in photo. lithography.

Mr. BATH: Private firms had not the two departments separate. The Premier should seek some advice from outsiders as to whether amalgamation would be practicable.

Item, Minimum Increases, £20:

Mr. SCADDAN: Would the Premier give the information promised in regard to the minimum increases? This seemed a favourable opportunity.

The PREMIER: A return was now available giving the information in regard to each department.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*London Agency*, £4,248:

Mr. KEENAN: This vote could very well be reduced in view of the approaching appointment of a Federal High Commissioner. Hitherto the Agent General went to London, not so much as a business man, but as a representative of the State at social functions entailing a large per-

sonal expenditure. The High Commissioner would in future represent the Commonwealth, and the representatives of the States would not be required to come forward and incur expenditure the Agents General hitherto had incurred in this regard. The expenditure on the indent office had also to be taken into consideration in dealing with the London Agency, and the two staffs had to be added. It was an unwarrantable expenditure when we were doing everything possible to economise in regard to moneys expended in the State. A thousand pounds a year would be sufficient for an Agent General whose duties would be to open up markets for the State's products, and possibly to advertise the products and attend to immigration and other matters which a business man would naturally discharge in the interests of the State. Also the staff could well be reduced. Far less than those employed would be sufficient to carry out any programme a business man would consider necessary to carry out to advance the interests of the State. Therefore it was his intention to move at the proper stage that the total vote be reduced by £1,000. Could that be done?

The CHAIRMAN: A ruling would be given when the hon. member moved.

Mr. KEENAN: Members were entitled to courtesy from the Chair. When the whole vote was put would it be in order to move?

The CHAIRMAN: The whole vote had already been put from the Chair.

Mr. KEENAN: After the discussion of the items would it then be in order to move a reduction of the whole vote?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member at any time could move an amendment relevant to the question put from the Chair.

Mr. KEENAN: One felt sure the Chairman did not desire to give an answer and leave the Committee in a state of doubt as to what it meant, and one could assume it would be correct that after the items were discussed a motion would be received to reduce the whole vote by some substantial amount. Therefore when that stage was reached he would move, and if he would not be in order

in doing so he assumed the Chair would now intimate it.

Mr. BATH: Before members could form any opinion in regard to the expenditure necessary on this department, there should be some statement from the Premier as to the intentions of the Government in regard to filling the position now left vacant by Mr. Rason's retirement. Until members knew what were the intentions of the Government, and what particular functions the Government expected the Agent General to fulfil in the future, they would be in the dark as to the amount of money that should be voted. In regard to the appointment of a High Commissioner the interests of Western Australia might be subordinated. Unless a wise selection of a High Commissioner were made, the individual States would not profit to any great extent by the appointment. If we were to have a gentleman merely going Home with the idea of identifying himself with social life, Western Australia would not derive any very great profit.

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

Mr. BATH: Too much emphasis was laid on the social qualifications necessary for the holder of the position of Agent General and too little on the business aptitude required. During the discussion on the salary to be paid to the High Commissioner for Australia great emphasis was laid on the fact that that gentleman must receive a large salary and the necessary expenses in order to enable him to "hold up his end of the log" with the other ambassadors in London. He agreed with the member for Kalgoorlie as to the qualifications necessary for a representative of this State, in view of the appointment in the near future of a High Commissioner. In the past the Australian point of view had not been sufficiently emphasised by the holders of the office of Agent General. Repeatedly in journals published in England attacks had been made, and even libels made, on Australia, and in many instances had been allowed to go unchallenged. Some of the worst offenders in this respect were those for whom Australia had done a great deal,

for whom Australia had produced wealth, men who had amassed fortunes out here and had gone to England to spend them, and who instead of being thankful to the country that placed them in the position often libelled it. For Western Australia as for the Commonwealth, a man was needed who would not only be able to advance our interests, keeping us in touch with all the latest movements in business, so that our growing productions in various directions might find markets, but a man who would always remember he was an Australian, one with a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of Australia, and one ever ready to resent attacks upon and defend those capabilities. Many representatives of British dominions had attached themselves to those who, under the plea that they were advancing Imperial interests, were helping along party politics. Our representative should keep entirely free from that atmosphere. There was an excellent opportunity now for a complete review of the work and the requirements of this department. The position was now practically vacant. A gentleman was holding the office temporarily and with regard to that gentleman complaints had been urged in the past, and with a great deal of reason, that the man who occupied the position of secretary to the London Agency, should keep in touch with the State. At present the secretary to the Agency was altogether out of touch with the position of Australia, owing to the fact that he had been away for so long. It would be a good thing if the appointment to that position were for a specified period, and that the officer should either pay periodical visits here, to make himself acquainted with our progress, or else that the occupant should be changed periodically. None would contend for a moment that the officer was capable of fulfilling the position of Agent General for any length of time. Now, therefore, we had an excellent opportunity of deciding what had been urged in this House before, that the appointment should be in the nature of the selection of a commercial agent for Western Australia, one to whom the advancement of Western Aus-

tralian business institutions would be the first consideration, and with whom social qualifications would be secondary. Such an agent must have all round qualifications.

Mr. Scaddan: There is no one more all-round than the Premier.

Mr. BATH: The position should be open to competition and we should have a large selection to choose from, just as in the selection of someone to the position of Railway Commissioner, or Public Service Commissioner. With the prospect of the appointment being made in the near future, the Committee were entitled to some direct statement from the Government as to their intentions with regard to the position. The attitude of the Government in regard to this matter would largely determine the attitude he would adopt on the proposal of the member for Kalgoorlie. If we were to have proper representation from the point of view of Western Australian interests, the sum of £1,500 a year was not too high, for a good man would be worth that money, and we could not reasonably ask that he should occupy the office for less. In regard to the other items in the vote, however, one could not speak with the same degree of certainty, but the first position in the office was worth the salary. With a good man we could reasonably expect that he would be able to reform the department in keeping with the requirements of Western Australia. Whether a High Commissioner was appointed in the near future, or not, we would need representation, and the best of representation for Western Australia.

Mr. BUTCHER: As the High Commissioner Bill was passed by the Federal House, and a suitable gentleman would be appointed to that position, it would necessarily follow that a certain amount of work would be taken by him off the office of our London Agency. Not only would the High Commissioner be called upon to fulfil the social portion of the departmental work, but he must necessarily take from that department a considerable amount of the general business. He must confess that he felt strongly inclined to support the member for Kalgoorlie in

his move to reduce the vote. Certainly there was room in the vote for great economies. During his recent visit to the old country he visited the London Agency many times, and it always appeared to him that the office was rather extravagantly managed, and that there were more hands employed than were necessary. Certainly there might be organisation with advantage. It was to be hoped the Premier would see his way to go Home to England as Premier and do something in the direction of organising the department. There was no necessity to provide the huge sum of £1,500 a year for remuneration for the head of that department, which could be managed by a secretary on a much smaller salary. He would not commit himself exactly to the amount the vote might be reduced by, but he felt with the member for Kalgoorlie that there should be economies, and consequently he thought it likely he would be found supporting that member in the matter.

Mr. OSBORN: The Leader of the Opposition was quite right when he said that Western Australian matters required at least some special attention at our own hands for some little time to come. The reason assigned by the member for Kalgoorlie for his advocacy of a reduction of the vote for the department was that a High Commissioner was likely to be appointed in the near future. None knew who was to be appointed to the position but it was pretty well recognised that someone would be chosen before long. However that might be, the sum of £1,500 for an Agent General in London had always been insufficient to enable the holder of that office to keep up to the position properly.

Mr. Underwood: And there has been very insufficient representation too.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. OSBORN: Whether the Agents General of the past had ability or not did not matter, for we were discussing not the personal ability of the holders of the office but the position itself. If we had been as unfortunate, as some members appeared to think, in our representation in London, that had not been the fault of

the position, but speaking personally, he had the greatest appreciation for the gentleman who had just retired from the office.

Mr. HEITMANN: You have more than I have.

Mr. OSBORN: Credit should be given to this gentleman who had filled the office for having displayed ability. As far as the recent Agent General was concerned, the remarks of some of the hon. members who had spoken could be taken as an indication that he had ability and had been eminently fitted to fill the position. At the same time the sum of £1,500 must have been very paltry for the late Agent General to enable him to do the work he had carried out for Western Australia during his period of office. The Committee should not agree to reduce the item at the present juncture. There would be plenty of time to take into consideration the question of a reduction when we were sure that the High Commissioner would be appointed, and when we received an assurance that this gentleman would give Western Australia some consideration. As to the suggestion of the member for Kalgoorlie that we simply required an indent agent—the member did not use that expression, but from his remarks it could be judged that the officer who would fill the position would be nothing more than an indent agent—if we made such an appointment, Western Australia would allow herself to drift back very considerably. We had reached that particular point when we required every effort to be put forward and to be given the opportunity to place our views and our requirements before the people of the old country. We talked about an indent agent being able to do all that was necessary under the heading of the "London Agency," but what hope had an indent officer of filling the position. He would be a person who was capable of going into the pros and cons of testing cast-iron and steel, overhauling locomotives, testing rails, etc., and his time would be pretty well occupied in that particular branch of business which Western Australia was transacting in the old country; and it would be utterly absurd to expect

him to carry out the necessary functions that were associated with the office of Agent General.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: What are they?

Mr. OSBORN: If the hon. member did not know it was time that he learnt. The hon. member had been only too ready to interject that the late Agent General had not been capable of carrying out his duties; therefore, it was to be concluded that the hon. member had some idea what the duties of the office were.

Mr. HEITMANN: We knew him before he went Home.

Mr. OSBORN: At any rate he (Mr. Osborn) had every respect for the late Agent General: he had done more good for Western Australia than any other gentleman who had represented the State in London, and he still recognised that he had a great deal more ability than many members in the House, including himself.

Mr. HEITMANN: You have a poor opinion of yourself.

Mr. OSBORN had a greater opinion of himself than he had of the hon. member who interjected. However, that was a matter of opinion, and no doubt if the member for Cue were asked a similar question, he would say that he had a better opinion of himself than of the member for Roebourne. It was to be hoped that the Committee would not abolish the department of the Agent General, or even reduce it by £1,000. After all, the amount of £4,248 was not a big item for the services rendered by the London Agency which were very valuable indeed to Western Australia, and were far more valuable than some hon. members thought. We also knew in the past that our Agents General had been successful from a social point of view as well as from a business point of view in furthering the interests of Western Australia, and as Western Australia had been well represented in the past the Committee should permit that representation to continue until we were satisfied that the change in the direction indicated by the Federal Parliament would be beneficial to Western Australia.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Leaving out altogether the question whether he approved

of the Agent General or not, the position was that it was the intention of the Federal Parliament to appoint a High Commissioner. The duties of that High Commissioner would be to represent Australia at the various functions, and do the work which was now being done by our Agent General, and if we left the agent there to carry on his work in the future as it had been carried on in the past, it would simply be adding another to the great crowd who were drawing money from the State, and not returning fair value for that money. The Leader of the Opposition was of opinion that the High Commissioner would only attend to the social functions. That was all our Agent General was doing at the present time. There was practically no other duty for the Agent General in London than to attend these social functions. In fact that was what he had been appointed for.

Mr. Angwin: You are wrong there.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Australia could do with one gentleman to attend to all the social functions. The Leader of the Opposition had pointed out too that many men who were supposed to have represented Australia at certain periods allowed libels to be circulated in London, while some of these gentlemen had themselves used libels against Australia pretty freely. He had in mind one gentleman in particular, Sir Horace Tozer, the Agent General for Queensland, and that kind of thing would always occur while the appointment of Agent General remained a political one. Sir Horace Tozer was only representing the great "Anti-Sosh" crowd in London, and necessarily he libelled everything in connection with Australia, particularly the legislation which had emanated from the party opposed to the great anti-socialists. There were many statements made by Sir Horace Tozer which were most extraordinary, particularly with regard to the immigration restriction legislation, and Australia could not afford to send men to London simply to give the opinion of one political party in Australia. Therefore, it would be a better policy to abolish the office entirely and appoint a business man in London, pay him a salary, and permit

the appointment to be made from the public service instead of politically. After all, if the appointment were a political one the gentleman appointed could only be expected to go to London to work points for the particular political party that appointed him. The leader of the Opposition said he would not come to a decision on the question until he had heard what arrangements had been made for the future in connection with the position. He (Mr. Underwood) intended to support any reduction proposed by the member for Kalgoorlie or anyone else, and if anyone went so far as to suggest that the whole vote should be wiped out, he would vote in that direction also. Information which he had had from people who had been in London went to show that the office was one of the most ridiculous things Western Australia had ever perpetrated. The secretary knew nothing whatever about Western Australia; indeed, he seemed to think it a credit not to know anything at all about the heastly colonies. Running down the list of Agents General for Western Australia it seemed that of all Sir Walter James had been the only man who had had any ability, commercial or political. The office was useless and the vote presented an excellent opportunity for exercising true economy.

Mr. JACOBY: It seemed to be the opinion of several members that the Agent General's office should be converted into a business office, and that the Agent General should become a general agent. It was unfortunate that when these appointments were made political considerations were paramount. He would not be prepared to support a heavy reduction in the vote, because he was of opinion that a really good business man, capable of doing the financial work of the State, could not be secured for £1,500 a year. A satisfactory Agent General might be available at that amount, but not a good business man. He could not agree that the office was unnecessary, because even when we had a High Commissioner that official would not take over the financial work of the States, or at all events not for some considerable time to come. The

number of clerks employed in the office certainly seemed to be excessive, and probably no injustice would have been done if the Treasurer, in making up the Estimates, had run his pen through a couple of them. He would repeat that it was unwise to talk of reducing the salary of the gentleman performing the duties of the office of Agent General, because if it were intended to place large financial responsibilities in the hands of one poorly paid, then hon. members would have only themselves to blame if corruption were to creep into the office.

The PREMIER: The fact that a birthday honour had been offered to a distinguished statesman of Australia was apparently the reason why the hon. member for Kalgoorlie considered that there was every probability of that statesman being appointed to the High Commissionership. But whilst rumour had been busy in that respect the same gentleman's name had been mentioned in connection with the post of president of the inter-State Commission. In regard to the question of the appointment of Agent General, although it might appear to some hon. members that the functions carried out by the Agent General were not of a very important character, yet as one who had had some experience in dealing with two Agents General, he was perfectly aware of the many important duties those gentleman had to carry out, irrespective of the social functions of which so much had been heard. In support of the proposed reduction one hon. member had stated that the functions of the Agent General would be practically confined to the duties of an indenting agent, to opening up markets for produce, and attending to immigrants; while more important matters in connection with finance were not referred to. He (the Premier) agreed with Mr. Jacoby that these latter were the most important functions the Agent General had to carry out, and until arrangements had been entered into between the States and the Commonwealth with regard to the transfer of State debts he did not see that there was any likelihood that the fulfilling of the same functions would not continue to be required so far as Western Australia was con-

cerned. As a rule our loan moneys averaged something like one million pounds per annum. The Agent General was largely responsible for the success or otherwise of these flotations. It was largely on his advice that the London market was approached. Of course the position would be entirely different if the financial functions were taken over by the Commonwealth, or if the Commonwealth were allowed any voice in the raising of State loans. The matter had been discussed on several occasions, and quite recently the various Agents General were instructed by their respective Governments to report on the matter of the functions of the High Commissioner. In dealing with this they had said—

"There remains to be considered what would be the position of the High Commissioner's office if such transfer were not made. Shorn of the State business, the High Commissioner's office, though one of great dignity, would not be important from a business point of view."

That was the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition—that although from a social point of view the functions of the representative of Australia would devolve upon the gentleman appointed to that position, it did not necessarily follow that he would become an active representative of the various States. The report continued—

"He would, of course, be the channel through which diplomatic communications would be made to the Colonial Office, but the cable has so greatly simplified the business of negotiation, that diplomatic work in London has lost much of its importance. He would voice the opinion of the Commonwealth Government in the public Press, and would probably be given the work of advertising the Commonwealth as a whole. In regard to immigration his influence would be limited to the extent of the co-operation of the States, but in the matter of commercial agencies he would have fair scope, especially if the States did not maintain their own separate agencies, and he would supervise the orders placed in Europe for material such as warlike stores, tele-

graphic material, etcetera, required by the Commonwealth departments, and in addition he would have the social duties which naturally attach themselves to the accredited representative of the Commonwealth. Consonant with his restricted functions the High Commissioner would probably require less salary than would otherwise be awarded him, and his staff would be correspondingly less. As a matter of fact if all things be considered the work of a High Commissioner would not be essentially greater than, even if so great as, that of the Agent General of an important State, for no duty that could be given to the Commissioner could be compared in importance with the work of negotiating a large loan or the carrying out of an important financial operation."

That was the report made by those gentlemen. In dealing with this matter he would like to point out that these various departments would still remain under our control. As a matter of fact the functions of the Agent General's office might be divided into four subdivisions, although theoretically worked from one office. Those subdivisions would be—general branch, commercial branch, branch for the purchase and inspection of material, and branch for the inscription of stock and payment of interest. As a matter of fact these distinct branches did not exist. Canada, after an experience of 25 years, still maintained her Agents General. Twenty-five years ago when the High Commissioner for Canada was appointed it was said that the necessity for State agencies would disappear; but although all those intervening years had elapsed since the appointment had been made, all the provinces of Canada were still represented in London.

Mr. Underwood: By Agents General?

The PREMIER: By whatever title they might be known there was a representative of each of the provinces. According to the latest available information the annual expenditure of the Canadian High Commissioner's office, including agencies and immigration, was £200,000. As a matter of fact but a very

small sum was provided in the High Commissioner's Bill for the purpose of a High Commissioner of Australia. He (the Premier) could not say exactly what the sum was, but he clearly remembered that on seeing it set down he had thought it was not sufficient for the important position to be occupied. In regard to the London Office certain reductions had been made, and if £1,000 was taken off the vote it would be practically impossible for the office to carry on. The incidentals represented £1,200, made up of £500 for rent, £400 for stationery, postages, telephone rents, cable messages, etcetera, and £300 for expenditure in the event of making a transfer of an Agent General. There was every probability some reductions might be made in the other items. He had made no secret of his idea that a certain reorganisation should take place when a new appointment was made.

Mr. Heitmann: Will you promise to look into it when you go Home?

The PREMIER: As the hon. member kindly suggested that might be done by him. As a matter of fact, people in all quarters of the State were apparently anxious he should take up the position of Agent General, but he had never intimated to anyone he intended to take the position. It was even said that because he stated he would not take the position he was going to take it; but the leader of the Opposition had not said he would take the position, and was that a reason to say the leader of the Opposition was going Home? Assuming the suggestion were adopted that whoever was appointed should be a man with a certain amount of business ability—it was presumed the person appointed would also need to have some knowledge of Western Australia—and even if the appointment were made apart from any political aspect, it would not be contended that £1,500 per annum was excessive payment. As the member for Swan pointed out, it was only fair and reasonable a man in a position of trust should receive a fair remuneration and be able to live decently. It was understood it cost considerably more for a man to live in London than in any of the States.

Mr. Heitmann: It is not a bit too much for a good man.

The PREMIER: The position of Agent General was one of the most important positions in the gift of the Government. The details of loan flotations were in the Agent General's hands; and even if State debts were transferred, it was the opinion of most members that freedom of borrowing should be retained by the States. At any rate, if a reduction were made it would certainly restrict the choice, it would simply limit the appointment to a man with independent private means, and that surely was not advisable? We know that the appointment of the High Commissioner of Canada was largely due to the fact that, while the gentleman appointed was a representative statesman, at the same time he was possessed of an ample private income. It would be unwise to do anything to lower the prestige of the London Office. There was no need to say anything further except that a re-organisation might be effected with some advantage. It was advisable that certain alterations should be made in the personnel of the staff, that men with a more intimate knowledge of Western Australia should supersede some who had not been able to get into touch with the State. In fact, a large proportion of them really had never had any knowledge of Western Australia. Improvement might be effected by appointing to the office men who were in touch with Western Australia and its resources, and a re-organisation on those lines would be of advantage to the State generally.

Mr. ANGWIN: It was pleasing to hear the Premier say there should be a change of staff. The need for an Agent General for the State would be equally as important when the High Commissioner was appointed as now; in fact, the chances were the Agent General would be of greater benefit to us than was the case in the past. Sufficient information had not been disseminated throughout England as to the State. In many parts of England people did not know where Western Australia was. In the case of Canada the business was entirely in the hands of the various representatives of the Provinces, and throughout England one heard of

Canada wherever one went. The Canadian money was well spent in England and Canada was well advertised, but in the case of Western Australia the money was not spent to the best advantage towards making the State well known throughout the length and breadth of England. It was to be hoped there would be no attempt to reduce the vote, because there would be no chance of the High Commissioner being in London before the 30th June next, so that even in regard to the social position our Agent General would need to remain until that date. He would support the retention of the vote.

Mr. Scaddan: Why not move to increase it by £1,000?

Mr. ANGWIN: If there was a good man sent to England—perhaps, the Premier would be a good man—one who realised the interests of the State and who would see that the State was well advertised, then an increase would be beneficial. Last year he (Mr. Angwin) had moved to reduce the vote in order to call attention to the need for an interchange of officers, but nothing was done in that direction because the amendment was lost by one vote. The Premier now evidently realised it would be an advantage to have persons from Western Australia in the London Office.

Mr. W. PRICE: The argument advanced by the hon. member would influence one to vote for a reduction. The hon. member, who had visited England, told us that people in England did not know where Western Australia was, which was a forcible argument for an alteration in the office; and when the hon. member told us that the money for advertising was not spent to the best advantage, it was again an argument that we should have a business man instead of a political—

Mr. Underwood: Derelict.

Mr. W. PRICE: It was questionable whether one would be in order in referring to political derelicts or political outcasts, but the argument of the member for East Fremantle was certainly in favour of the appointment of a business man. There was £650 for a secretary. We might reduce that salary and make it in accord-

ance with salaries paid in ordinary business houses. Again the Premier did not wish the House to imagine it was necessary to pay £662 for clerks. There was an item of £50 for the Premier's secretary. It would be interesting to know how this money was expended, and who received it. Certainly the vote could be reduced by £1,000. If there was a chance of success he would move to strike out the whole vote, not to abolish the office but to reorganise it and have it put on a more businesslike footing. What was the gain to the State to have some individual in London to attend to social functions? The only State to appoint a non-political Agent General was New South Wales when they sent Mr. Coghlan to England, and he was the only one who had proved a success. That gentleman had never hesitated to give the lie direct to men like Sir Horace Tozer. The Agent General's position appeared to be looked upon as a place where ex-Premiers went in the hope that they would receive a title. If they wanted a title let them go to England and keep themselves there at their own expense. There was appearing on the Estimates provision amounting to £300 for the expenses of the new Agent General in going to England. Why should the State pay that gentleman his expenses on the road? He was going Home to look for a title, and should pay his own expenses. The time had come when, in the interests of economy, we should reduce our expenditure in connection with the London Office. The Government refused funds in connection with educational requirements and for the upkeep and support of the sick and suffering, refused money on all hands to the people instead of reducing the expenditure in connection with the Agent General's office. On the contrary the amount had been increased by £235 as compared with last year. Good old social functions must be attended to, while the Government could not find the money to help the sick. Instead of having a figure head to go to banquets, the Government should appoint a man who would be in his office from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. attending to his

work. We needed a business man there, and one could be obtained for less than £1,500 a year. A secretary might be appointed for less than £650 a year, for surely £400 would be sufficient for that position. He intended to vote for the reduction of the item.

Mr. BROWN: Should the member for Kalgoorlie agree to reduce his amendment to £500 he would support it. At present half the year had gone, and it consequently would not be wise to reduce the total vote by £1,000. His reason for voting for the reduction would be as a protest against keeping in the office of the Agent General an under-secretary who had been there for many years and who was practically out of touch with the State; anyhow he would vote against any increase in the department.

Item, Agent General, £1,500:

Mr. BATH: In view of the fact that Sir Cornthwaite Rason vacated the position in October, and a temporary appointment had been made, undoubtedly some decision must have been arrived at by the Government in regard to the future. He had already asked the Premier to give an intimation to members as to the intention of the Government with regard to filling the office. Members were entitled to some information on the question. If we received an intimation that it was proposed to convert the office into a commercial agency, to adjust it on new lines, to have not only the Agent General but also other officers, especially the secretary, thoroughly conversant with the conditions in Australia, then to his mind the vote would not be too much. If we had a thorough business man as Agent General, and a good man as secretary, the sum appearing on the Estimates would be necessary to have the State's true position placed before the people in the old country, to have questions of finance attended to, and our business as a State going to export in the future, kept in the foreground.

Mr. Scaddan: Who will see that the new Agent General is a business man?

Mr. BATH: If we received an intimation from the Government that a business man would be appointed, or in the

event of receiving no promise to that effect, if the House ordered this to be done then it would be for the Government to appoint a business man.

Mr. Scaddan: Do you mean that the appointment should be non-political?

Mr. BATH: The Government should advertise the position and so have the best selection to choose from. If a gentleman could fulfil all the necessary qualifications, and at the same time be a politician, there was no objection to it. Members were entitled to some intimation as to the intentions of the Government.

The PREMIER: Just previously to the expiration of the term of office of Sir Cornthwaite Rason, members had been informed that the Hon. S. Burt had been approached with the object of ascertaining whether he would take the position of acting Agent General until the Government came to a decision with regard to a permanent appointment. The question of the High Commissioner had naturally some effect upon the appointment, and the Government considered it would be advisable to hold over the selection until some reorganisation might be effected in the Agent General's office. Nothing further had been done, and no person had been singled out for that appointment. At the same time if in the opinion of the Government an individual could satisfactorily represent the State the fact that he was a politician surely should not be a bar to his appointment. There seemed to be an inclination all round to bar politicians from appointments. While he was averse to political appointments, at the same time the fact of a man being in politics should certainly not be a bar to his occupying the position. No appointee had yet been selected, but it was the intention of the Government to effect a reorganisation, and whether he should go home to England for a couple of months with that end in view, or otherwise, had not yet been determined. It was the intention of the Government to effect that reorganisation with a view of appointing men in the Agent General's office who had some knowledge of Western Australia.

Mr. KEENAN: Would the Premier tell the Committee whether the acting Agent General received any additional salary as such, or whether the salary for the position and the rent of the house was being saved, and would continue to be saved until the permanent appointment was made.

The Premier: What do you mean by "rent of the house"?

Mr. KEENAN: Undoubtedly when the Agent General vacated the office he left the house.

The Premier: The Agent General had to find his own house.

Mr. KEENAN: But the Premier said that there was a sum of £500 for rent.

The Premier: That was for office rent.

Mr. KEENAN: Well, how much was being paid to the secretary of the department for filling the position of acting Agent General?

The PREMIER: In accordance with precedent the acting Agent General was receiving the difference between his salary and that of the Agent General while he was carrying on the duties of Agent General, that was, he was being paid at the rate of £1,050. With regard to the £500 referred to, this amount was for the rent of offices. As a matter of fact Victoria at the present time was spending an amount of £70,000 in the erection of new offices; our amount of £500 must therefore be looked upon as very reasonable.

Mr. TAYLOR: Some time previously, when the gentleman who occupied the position of secretary to the London Agency was found fault with on the grounds of his long absence from Western Australia, which rendered him absolutely out of touch with the progress of the State, the then Treasurer, who was now Minister for Works, intimated to the Committee that the question of appointing an up-to-date successor would be considered. He (Mr. Taylor) had already intimated that this office should be filled by under secretaries of the various departments of the State for a period of three years, and in that way the officers would be up-to-date and kept in touch

with the progress of the various industries in the State. The present secretary could only keep himself in touch with Western Australian affairs through the Press.

Mr. Scaddan: Put Mr. North in his place.

Mr. TAYLOR: Even the appointment of Mr. North to the position would benefit the State. Hon. members might think differently, but if they knew that gentleman as he (Mr. Taylor) knew him they would change their opinion. Any under secretary in the State at the present time would be more qualified to fill the position of secretary to the London Agency than the gentleman who at present held that office. The Premier only that evening pointed out the necessity of having a man as Agent General who thoroughly knew Western Australia, and who was a sound commercial and business man, and whose political views did not interfere with the position. The present secretary however had not been in the State for twenty years and a man who, after such a long absence, came back to the State to-day, would certainly find a vast difference. If the Premier undertook the trip to England during the recess there was no doubt that in going through the various departments in the Agent General's office he would be able to reorganise them, and whoever might be in charge of the Estimates next year would be able to refer to the advantage of that investigation and reorganisation which had been carried out by the Premier during his stay in the old country. There was a prevailing opinion, however, that when the Premier arrived in England he would see the necessity for re-maintaining there to carry out his organisation scheme completely. The gentleman who filled the office of secretary should be a man with up-to-date knowledge of Western Australia; he should know everything about every industry, and an absence of three years from the State would be sufficiently long. If anyone went to the office of the Agent General to secure information about Western Australia the secretary would be the first officer to be interrogated as to the possibilities of this country for purposes of settlement,

and if the interrogator were informed that the secretary had not been in Western Australia for some twenty years, when the population was only 40,000 people, whereas now it was something under 300,000 people, he would certainly declare that the secretary was not a person who would be competent to give the information which was sought, and he would appeal to somebody who had more knowledge of the country.

Mr. KEENAN: It had been his intention to move a large reduction in the whole vote but in view of the discussion he did not think he would be justified in moving that that reduction should exceed £500. The Treasurer had spoken of the importance of the questions of finance, and he had assured the Committee that the duties associated with the question of loans were such that should not warrant the Committee in taking any steps to reduce the expenses either in the salary of the Agent General or in the expenses of the office, but he (Mr. Keenan) ventured to say that when a loan was negotiated in London, although the Agent General took a great responsibility in connection with it, there was very little work for him to do with regard to it. The bulk of the work was done by the underwriters and the Agent General advised the Government, who in turn issued instructions. Further, the Treasurer assured the Committee that a saving might be made at the expense of the staff, but at a time when all the votes were being cut down, to achieve that economy it should not be necessary to suggest that a saving should be made, it should have been attempted in the Estimates which had been laid on the Table. On the figures submitted, if no appointment were made until March next, in connection with the office of Agent General, a saving would be effected to the extent of £375, even making allowance for the increase in the salary paid to the secretary. When it was borne in mind that the Indent Office and the Agent General's Office were practically one and the same, and the expenses of both amounted to close on £6,000, it seemed absurd to say that there was no room for a small sav-

ing such as was proposed. There was no desire that the motion to reduce the vote should be viewed in the light that it was intended to reduce the importance of the office, or to place a bar on a man of business being appointed to the office; it should only be made clear that the policy of economy was widespread, and that nothing to which the pruning knife could be applied had been left untouched. He moved—

That the vote be reduced by £500.

Mr. WALKER: If the office were to be maintained at all the amount placed on the Estimates for it was not too large. He could not follow those who stated that they did not wish to reduce the importance of the office, and at the same time wished to lessen the possibilities of that office. There could be no question that with the appointment of a High Commissioner for the whole of Australasia, the individual States, to get individual recognition, would have to struggle somewhat. The great State where the seat of central government would ultimately be would overshadow the outlying States of the Commonwealth, even with the representation at Home, whether at social functions or in the ordinary avenues of business. And unless individual States were prepared to assert their individuality their existence would be more or less obscured. However we might talk of the Federal spirit it was certain that the individual States were trying to do the best for themselves; and it was right that they should do so. For whilst there might be a distributed patriotism covering the whole of the Commonwealth, there was also a sort of individual patriotism for the State of which we were citizens. And if we were to maintain that position and help this country ahead, we must have in London a representative whose very title would carry with it a certain amount of respect. It sometimes happened that there was something in a name, and our representative should be given all the power we could give him, even to the point of his title, in order that he might have the fullest scope for doing good for the State. Notwithstanding what some hon. members

thought, it was clear that the Agent General in London had much to do and that he would have still more to do. It was admitted that we required a man of business capacity; but even so, there was no reason why we should not still call him the Agent General of the State of Western Australia. At no time in the period of the growth of the States had there been a greater demand for representatives in London of acute knowledge commercial and political. Great changes would take place within the next few years in the mother country, and our representative must be able to commingle with those who were shaping the destiny of the Empire. Sometimes the British Government had entered into treaties which had been inimical to the automatic development of this State, namely, those treaties with Asiatic nations, which might or might not in the near future prove a menace to Western Australia in her juxtaposition to those nations. In such matters the Agent General representing Western Australia should be on the alert and indeed should be consulted. It seemed that the statesmen of the mother country were commencing to recognise the necessity for consulting the representatives of the outlying parts of the Empire in such matters, for they had talked of giving the larger commonwealths and dominions a natural voice in the legislation, and therefore, indirectly, in the administration of the Empire beyond the seas. Consequently we should send Home in the near future men who knew the trend of public sentiment in the Commonwealth, and particularly in the State they represented. It should be our best, our most respected and most capable citizen who was sent as our ambassador to represent us in the modifying of the policy of the mother country.

Mr. Butcher: Would that not fall upon the High Commissioner?

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly; but colloquially it would fall on the Agents General also.

Mr. Seaddan: It is not proposed to reduce the Agent General's salary.

Mr. WALKER: It was a proposal to hit at the Agent Generalship; that was the object and purpose of it.

Mr. Brown: At the mismanagement of the office.

Mr. WALKER: No; it was an indication of a wish for a change. He would not be surprised if it were a hit at the Premier for not having taken the House into his confidence; for not telling the hon. members exactly what he meant to do. He (Mr. Walker) certainly believed that the Premier was going; and he did not know any better man on the Ministerial side of the House for the post. If the Premier would take his advice; if the Premier wanted to better his own position and not have evil communications corrupting good manners, he would go. He (Mr. Walker) believed it was merely a sense of loyalty to his colleagues, the Attorney General and others, that kept the Premier where he was; but if the Premier really wanted to help the State in the counsels of the Empire, he would forget his colleagues, and would go and serve the State in the place where the highest and most capable of men were communing. Wishing him well he (Mr. Walker) felt safe in congratulating the Premier on having attained to that high and eminent distinction.

The PREMIER: While deeply appreciating what Mr. Walker had said of him, he (the Premier) would not be justified in stating the intentions of the Government, inasmuch as no determination had been come to in respect to the appointment. He did not think that in the circumstance any Government would be justified in forecasting, some months ahead, what they intended to do in respect to an appointment of the sort. Surely the hon. member could not expect that this would have been done. The Government had purposely left the question open in order that an appointment might be made without prejudice. What would the position be if an appointment were made, and if, when the time came to take up that appointment, it were found that another Government were in office?

Mr. BUTCHER: Was it intended to keep the London Agency in its present form? If it was to be so maintained, and was not to be re-organised he would

be strongly in favour of supporting the amendment moved by Mr. Keenan; but if the office were to be re-organised and a sum of money given to the Agent General to enable him to advertise the State as it should be advertised, then he would not be in favour of any such amendment. The complaints of Agents General in the past had been that the Government would not give them the money necessary to adequately advertise the State. In consequence of this the London office was not being run in the best interests of the State. He was certain that if the Premier were to go home to London he would not return to the State until he left the office thoroughly established on a sound footing, and that in future he would give to the Agent General the necessary funds to advertise the State and make the office one worthy of Western Australia. At the present time it was nothing more than a commercial agency, and if that were the sort of institution we required it would be better frankly to reduce it to the level of a commercial agency.

Amendment (to reduce vote by £500) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	28

Majority against .. 14

AYES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. McDowall
Mr. Butcher	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gourley	Mr. Swan
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Holman	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Hudson	(Teller).
Mr. Keenan	

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Monger
Mr. Bath	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Bolton	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Carson	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Osborn
Mr. Draper	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Gill	Mr. J. Price
Mr. Gordon	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Ware
Mr. Helmann	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Horan	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. Layman
Mr. Male	(Teller).
Mr. Mitchell	

Amendment thus negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Printing*, £27,977—agreed to.

Vote—*Public Service Commissioner*, £862—agreed to.

Vote—*Refunds*, £2,500—agreed to.

Vote—*Taxation*, £13,742:

Mr. BATH: In this department we had the collection not only of the land and income tax but also of other taxes placed under the Commissioner of Taxation, and in the report of the Commissioner, while we had a considerable amount of information in regard to the income tax and its incidence, there was but the scantiest information in regard to the incidence of the land tax. It was said the information was not available until the land valuer, recently appointed, had had an opportunity of completing his valuation. The expense in which the State was involved in connection with the appointment of this valuer was not warranted. A most correct valuation of the unimproved values for taxation purposes could be secured by a different method and at less expense. That was one of the reasons why members should have been given the opportunity of reviewing the measure under which the land valuer was appointed. If we had the method adopted in New Zealand and which was to be adopted elsewhere, that of allowing the taxpayers to submit their own valuations with the right of the Government to purchase at those valuations, plus an amount for disturbance, we would have more accurate valuations, and there would be less opportunity for evading the tax, and there would be no need for an expensive staff being built up around the Commissioner of Taxation. At present the cost of collection, £13,742, meant 6 per cent. on the amount raised by taxation. The cost of raising the dividend duty and totalisator tax was not very high, because there was no difficulty in the racing clubs making up their returns, and all the State had to do was to apportion the amount of tax according to the amount specified in the Act, so that the bulk of the cost was incurred in collecting the land tax and the income tax, and that cost was abnormally high. Seeing the tax had now operated for two assessments members should have the

fullest information prior to the tax being re-enacted, so that we might know exactly the incidence of the tax, and so that we would not be in the dark as we were now as to how the tax was adjusted to the various classes of the population.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be out of order to discuss the incidence of the land tax under the vote for the department; only the actual expenditure could be discussed.

Mr. MALE: Would the Treasurer say what difference it made to the Treasury vote by transferring the collection of the dividend duties to the Taxation Department?

The PREMIER: The amount put down in connection with the land values certainly bore a high proportion to the total expenses. The Commissioner of Taxation in dealing with this subject in his report said—

“The values of the land shown in the books of the municipalities and roads boards are not assessed or recorded on a uniform system, and values are frequently given with a view to the imposition of a certain rate in the pound of local tax; further, the books of a number of the local bodies contain only the capital or annual value of the land plus improvements, as many do not tax on the unimproved value. When the land returns were received there was no reliable record of values with which to verify and adjust the values declared on the returns. There was therefore no alternative but in the majority of cases to accept provisionally the values given by the taxpayers, reserving the power to adjust these values up or down when the land had been officially valued by the department.”

Since then the services of officers of different departments had been secured in connection with these values. Several inspectors of conditional purchases in the Lands Department had been engaged in valuing the country lands in various portions of the State, with the result that it was almost universally the case that the values had been increased considerably. Again, in regard to suburban districts, an officer of the Land Titles Department, Mr. Hogarth, had been engaged in valu-

ing some municipalities, South Perth and Victoria Park, while the services of several agents had also been requisitioned with a view to carrying out the work. In addition, an officer of the Public Works Department, one with considerable experience under Mr. Stronach in connection with land resumptions, was engaged on the work. It was anticipated that the completion of the values would lead to a much larger sum being received from the land tax. One roads board simply adopted the system of valuing freehold land at £1 an acre, and of conditional purchase land at 10s. an acre irrespective of locality or the quality of the land; such a method could not be adopted by the department. With the services of those various officers the Commissioner of Taxation was confident that a complete valuation would be made. As they were made the values were recorded on the official lithographs and would be kept on the sub-division file in the Taxation Department. It would, therefore, be unnecessary in future years to obtain the information again, and a large reduction could be made. As the result the value of land owned by taxpayers could be readily compared with the taxpayers' declared values. The returns sent in by the taxpayer could be checked not only as to the value but to see whether he had omitted any of his lands. The card system adopted in the department would make this work of comparison very simple. As to the amount saved by the transfer of dividend duties to the Taxation Department, it was doubtful whether any saving would be made. Mr. Edmondson, the officer engaged on the work in the Treasury, had been transferred. Regarding the dividend duties generally a case had been arranged to be heard at an early date in the Supreme Court; if either party were dissatisfied with the decision of that Court there would be an appeal to the High Court. The case was merely one of law, and would be argued at an early date. It was as to the amount outstanding in regard to dividend duties on dividends declared.

Mr. CARSON: Some time ago the question was raised as to whether it would be possible for taxes to be paid in the various

centres of the State. According to the report of the Commissioner, the contention he had previously raised in this respect was proved to be correct, and it was clear that something of the sort should be done. The Commissioner said that inspections revealed the fact that in spite of public notices and advertisements, numerous taxpayers, especially in the country districts, had neglected to furnish their returns for the year 1907-8. Greater convenience should be given to the people to pay taxes. Farmers found a difficulty and inconvenience in sending to Perth, but if the Government officers in the various country districts were allowed to take the taxes the result would be beneficial to all concerned.

The PREMIER: It was easy to realise that there were cases where it would be very much more convenient if taxpayers could pay in the different centres instead of sending to Perth. He would approach the Commissioner of Taxation with the view of seeing whether the suggestion of the hon. member could be complied with. If there were no reasonable objection the Commissioner would doubtless accede to the request.

Mr. WALKER: In regard to the interpretation of the existing land taxation laws, he would like to know whether the interpretation of those laws rested with the Commissioner of Taxation or whether it was done for him by the Crown law authorities. No sooner did the land tax come into force than the holder of a homestead block was taxed. The Act of 1906 exempted from taxation conditional purchases up to 1,000 acres, providing that they should pay nothing for five years. The man who held 999 acres of first-class land need not pay a tax for five years, but the owner of a homestead block who could afford no more land, being unable to pay the rent to the Government for a larger area, was immediately taxed. By what authority was that done? Had the Commissioner allocated to himself the power of deciding it? In the case of a man who took up 300 or 400 acres of conditional purchase lands and added to it a homestead block of 160 acres, the position was that he held the

former for five years without paying a tax but had immediately to pay a tax on the lands held as a homestead block. The anomaly was that a man could hold 300 acres and pay nothing, but the man who held 160 acres was taxed.

The PREMIER: The procedure was that the Commissioner of Taxation, when in doubt on a matter brought under his notice, would consult with the Crown law authorities in order to obtain a ruling. The hon. member was right in the contention that it was the intention of the Committee, when the Bill was before the House, to exempt all conditional purchases up to 1,000 acres for five years. He had been under the impression that homestead blocks would be included. Although, as a matter of fact, these blocks might be termed freehold, that was only so under certain conditions, so after all it was a question whether they should not be construed into being a conditional purchase. The blocks were held under certain conditions of improvement; they ceased to be freehold and became Crown lands when the conditions were not complied with. It was an interesting point, and he would endeavour to secure further information with regard to the matter. Doubtless many such cases cropped up in the State. The reason for granting exemptions on conditional purchases for five years was that in the early stages a settler had very many more expenses than there were later on, and, therefore, the Government decided to make the exemption.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Miscellaneous Services*, £73,540:

Mr. FOULKES: Year after year an institution that thoroughly deserved a Government grant was omitted from the Estimates; that was the Children's Protection Society. A great deal of good was done by this society, who raised a sum of £500 or £600 a year for the purpose of taking charge of children who, in many cases, were orphans, and were without proper maintenance. Inspectors were appointed by the society to see that no cases of cruelty occurred among the children, and excellent work had been achieved. A deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary recently with regard to

this society and asked for a Government grant, and in reply the Minister said he recognised the good work that was being done and the help the society was to the State department. Last year the question was brought up, and the then Treasurer undertook to look into the matter and see if a grant could not be spared.

The Premier: Would not the amount appear on the Colonial Secretary's Estimates?

Mr. FOULKES: The items in the Colonial Secretary's Estimates dealt with the State department which controlled orphanages and industrial schools, but had no control over the society in question, which worked side by side with the State department. This society subscribed largely to the maintenance of many children, and they arranged for the boarding out of a great number of children. The Treasurer might out of the same fund assist this society.

Item, Home for Friendless Women, Boulder, £100:

Mr. ANGWIN: Would the Treasurer inform the Committee what was done with this sum of money?

The PREMIER: The information at his disposal was to the effect that the institution had passed another successful year.

Mr. Scaddan: Where is it?

The PREMIER: The member for Boulder would no doubt be able to give some information about it. The report of the institution stated that no one had been refused admission to it, though at times the resources of the house had been fully taxed and it went on to say that a number of improvements had been made to the building. The total expenditure for the year was £296 6s. 8d., towards which the State contributed £68 8s. 2d. The place was called "Willard House," and from the name it might be concluded that the institution was connected with the Women's Temperance Union.

Item, Rescue and Prison Gate Work, £400:

Mr. ANGWIN: Would the Treasurer inform the Committee what happened to the money, and what was done in the direction of rescue work?

The PREMIER: In addition to the prison gate work, there was a certain amount expended in connection with the Home of the Good Shepherd at Leederville. Their report stated that from January, 1907, to January, 1908, 14 individuals were admitted, and from January, 1909, to September 27th, 1909, the number was again 14. Practically the whole of the vote was distributed between the homes at North Fremantle and the Home of the Good Shepherd at Leederville.

Mr. JACOBY: It would be wise if a financial statement were obtained from these societies each year and laid on the Table of the House. Members would then be in a position to say whether they would be justified in passing the vote. If the Treasurer made the suggestion to the bodies concerned no doubt the statements would be prepared.

The PREMIER: The Colonial Secretary had instructed the Superintendent of Charities to make inquiries from the different institutions to which the Government contributed funds, so that the Treasurer might have the opportunity of satisfying himself that the work for which the money was voted was carried out on economic lines. That same information could be made available to the Committee.

Item, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, £50:

Mr. SWAN: The Government ought to assist the society to a greater extent than it had done in the past. The Premier might give the Committee information as to what the amount on the Estimates represented. The inspector of the society carried out a great deal of good work in many ways and a little time ago made application for assistance from the Government in the shape of a free pass over the railway lines, but it was refused. The least the Government could do would be to grant this officer a free railway pass. It would mean nothing to the public purse, but would mean a lot to the society.

The PREMIER: If the Government acceded to this request, they would have to fall in with similar requests from various institutions, and it would be difficult to refuse them. These various institutions

were nearly all contributed to by different people throughout the State, and naturally they would make a similar application. In connection with all railway passes issued the Commissioner for Railways received the equivalent whether the passes were for charitable purposes, for distinguished people, or for services rendered.

Item, Fire Brigades Board and Fire Brigades—(Contribution and Subsidy (Maximum subsidy, £150), £1,750:

Mr. BOLTON: Last year attention was called to the amount of this subsidy, and the Treasurer promised to make further inquiries. He was still dissatisfied with the amount that Boulder had collected in connection with their demonstration last year, subsidies having been paid on the demonstrations and again on the receipts; and if the Treasurer was not prepared to go into the matter the same thing would happen this year. Was a further inquiry made by the Treasurer last year as to whether an over-payment was made?

The PREMIER: If a promise to conduct that inquiry was made, no doubt it was carried out. In any case a limit would be put on the amount that could be received. The total expenditure last year was £2,420, and if members turned to page 52 of the public accounts they would get the information they desired.

Mr. HEITMANN: What was the Premier's intention in regard to the payment of fire brigade subsidies for this year?

Mr. HOLMAN: The same as last year, pound for pound.

Mr. HUDSON: It really seemed that the country fire brigades had been led to believe that they would be entitled to receive pound for pound up to £150. On the strength of this considerable efforts had been made by one brigade, the members of which had raised a sum of money, and indeed had incurred expenditure on the understanding that the subsidy would be paid to them. An intimation had now been given to that brigade that there was no intention to pay the subsidy. If that were so, it was a distinct breach of faith on the part of those administering the grant. He would like to know what was

the intention for the present financial year.

The PREMIER: What was intended was to pay a pound for pound subsidy with a maximum of £150. As a matter of fact it was anticipated that before the end of the year the Fire Brigades Bill would be in force, and the Government would be to some extent relieved of the subsidy, although, of course, they would have to pay their proportionate part of the amount raised. At the present time the Bill formed the subject of inquiry by a Select Committee, and although it was understood that suggestions had been made for altering the proportionate representation—that was to say, that the number the Government would have on the board should be reduced—yet it was understood that no alteration would be attempted in the proportionate contribution to the general fund.

[Mr. Taylor took the Chair.]

Mr. ANGWIN: Some alteration should be made in the distribution of the grant. The system in vogue made beggars of the fireman, for they had to run round soliciting private assistance before they could claim any subsidy, while if the brigade were maintained by the municipality, then no Government assistance whatever was given. The system was distinctly unfair, and it had been the means of giving some brigades money to which they were not entitled. He had even heard of cheques being paid in to the subscription list with a view to swelling the Government grant and being afterwards drawn out again. If the Minister assisted any brigades at all he ought to assist the lot. Some of the brigades had very large subsidies, while others got very little indeed.

Mr. HOLMAN: The system of assistance to fire brigades had never been satisfactory in Western Australia, nor would it be satisfactory until the Bill now before the Legislature, or one similar to it, was passed. In the past the insurance companies in Western Australia had been on velvet, for they had received all the benefits of the fire brigades system, while, outside of Perth and Fremantle,

they had contributed nothing to it. The time had arrived when those companies should be compelled to subscribe their fair quota towards the upkeep of the brigades. Many of the brigades had not received a penny from the Government towards their upkeep, the municipalities bearing the whole of the cost. Others, like the Cue brigade, had not been supported to any great extent by the municipality, but had been carried on mainly through the exertions of the firemen in collecting from private donors and, collaterally, from the Government. It was not a desirable system at all, and the sooner we introduced the Victorian system the better. The whole amount of subscriptions given by the insurance companies in Western Australia towards the cost of brigades outside of Perth and Fremantle was less than £10. In every other State of the Commonwealth the insurance companies had to contribute substantially towards the upkeep of the brigades, but here they would not even render the satisfaction of replying to an application for assistance. Although in the aggregate the amounts paid by the Government towards the brigades seemed considerable, yet as a matter of fact it was not much when one had regard to the value of the services performed by the brigades.

Mr. W. PRICE: Possibly the Treasurer was not aware of some ugly rumours in circulation for some time past in respect to the large subsidy of £981 9s. paid to the Boulder brigade in 1907-8. Was it the intention of the Government to insist upon proper balance-sheets being submitted when so large an amount of subsidy was about to be paid to any brigade? When the Government were paying away these large sums of money hon. members should be informed as to who had certified to the correctness of the amounts collected on which the subsidy was paid. It was rumoured that on the occasion referred to the value of the trophies given at the demonstration was included in the amount on which the subsidy was collected.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is the usual thing.

Mr. W. PRICE: If it were the usual thing it was a system the Government should see about removing. This showed the need for insisting on proper balance-sheets being forthcoming. It was also stated that a sum of £100 granted by the Boulder council was included in the amount on which the Government paid subsidy, and that on the occasion of the Boulder demonstration money was loaned to the brigade officials and subsidy paid on it, the loans being subsequently repaid. The Premier should give assurance that in future money granted for these subsidies should be upon proper vouchers, and only upon bona fide donations, and it should be seen that the money was properly expended. It would be interesting if it could be ascertained whether any balance-sheet was presented to any body in connection with the Boulder demonstration. In view of the allegations made we should know how and on whose authority the money was secured, who certified the amount, and what became of it, and whether any balance-sheet had been presented.

The PREMIER: When matters such as the rumours to which the hon. member referred came within their notice it was the duty of members to advise the Under Treasurer. The only previous instance of a similar state of affairs was brought under notice by a member of the House, and as a result an inquiry was now being made to ascertain who was responsible for what was nothing more nor less than a faked balance-sheet. In this case, although some time had elapsed since the payment was made, an endeavour would be made to obtain information as to whether a balance-sheet was presented, or whether a certificate was made by a responsible individual as to the amount collected. Certainly a balance-sheet certified to by a duly qualified and recognised auditor should be presented, and a declaration made by a responsible person, either the mayor or someone else, that the amount set out was actually collected. He (the Premier) would be one of the first to resent any crooked dealing of that kind. It was criminal where an amount was advanced for the purpose of

collecting a subsidy from the Government and then, when the subsidy was collected, to have the amount returned to the person lending the money. If ever there was a case of obtaining money under false pretences that was one. It was hardly necessary to tell the hon. member that every endeavour would be made to see that statements of claim in such instances would be duly audited.

Item, Fire Brigade Demonstration; grant, including railway fares and freights, £750:

Mr. HEITMANN asked for information.

The PREMIER: This vote appeared on the Estimates every year. The last demonstration was held at Bunbury, and at the annual meeting the brigades decided that the next demonstration should be held at Fremantle. The usual amount was here provided to enable the payment of fares and freights for the brigades visiting the demonstration.

Mr. HOLMAN: The amount was all eaten up by railway fares and freights for about 500 firemen.

The Minister for Mines: It was hard to fix the minimum and maximum number travelling; he wanted the brigades to do that.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was almost impossible to do so. In Victoria the whole responsibility as to fares and freights was placed in the hands of a board, and it was impossible to have fraud in connection with attempting to secure grants from the Government. The only reason for the existence of such attempts in this State was the absence of a proper system, and that system would not be obtained until the Bill now before the Council was passed.

Mr. HEITMANN: The volunteer firemen were doing good work and deserved every encouragement, but the Government and taxpayers were being imposed on by some of the brigades.

The Minister for Mines: They were last year.

Mr. HEITMANN: Until the last year or two the secretary of the Fire Brigades' Association had the power to guarantee that certain people were firemen and

were entitled to railway tickets; but this proved unsatisfactory to the Government; and it was decided to pay a lump sum. There was no objection to genuine competitors travelling free, but last year there were instances of persons travelling on free passes who were not competitors. For instance, 24 men from Boulder told the public and all the other competitors that they were simply out for a picnic, and they took no part in the demonstration, although they were champions in the previous year.

Mr. Collier: You Cne people are jealous because Boulder beat you.

Mr. HEITMANN: That was only one of many cases. One man unaccompanied by any other member of his brigade attended on a free pass from beyond Mount Morgans. Even on the Murchison, where 10 or 12 usually came down to take part in the demonstration, very often there were several men not belonging to the brigades who travelled on free passes.

Mr. Holman: That is the fault of the brigades.

Mr. HEITMANN: It was also the fault of the system. Of course it might be remedied with all the brigades working under one board. The Railway Department should take precautions to see that none other than competitors were allowed to use these railway passes in the future.

[*Mr. English resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. SCADDAN: It was to be hoped the Minister for Railways would put in to effect the suggestion made in regard to the maximum and minimum number of firemen, as was done in connection with other organisations. When the Government were prepared to issue passes there were always individuals who would push themselves forward. What was done in regard to other organisations could be done in regard to firemen.

The Minister for Mines: We are doing it.

Mr. SCADDAN: The member for Cue was correct in his remarks. Some brigades had a difficulty in maintaining a decent strength until just before a demonstration. The Government for their own

protection should compel the Fire Brigades Association to keep a proper record of members. The passes were granted as a recompense to the men for the services they had rendered in the previous 12 months. Members should belong to the brigades for a certain period before being granted these concessions. The Fire Brigades Association would, without doubt, be willing to assist the Minister in preventing this sort of thing from being continued.

The Premier: We should be able to apply the same thing to the bands.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Band Association kept a proper register of members, and none who had been in the band for less than three months could take part in competitions. The secretary of the Band Association kept the register. When the Government were generous enough to give the passes it was to the interest of the organisations themselves to see that the privilege was not abused.

Mr. HOLMAN: For several years past every member of the Fire Brigades Association was forced to be registered for three months before the demonstration took place, and every member had to pay a registration fee of 2s. 6d. before getting his name on the roll. If members not belonging to the brigades were sent down on free passes that was the fault of the brigades in the various centres. The cost of sending these brigades was considerable, for to send the members from Cue to the demonstration last year cost something like £50. The large cost in the past was due to the fact that not only the fire brigades but also the bands travelled on the free passes. There was a great difference between the two bodies, for whereas free passes were granted to the bandsmen to compete for trophies of £50 and £100, passes were granted to the firemen to compete for nominal prizes. The former were professionals.

Item, *Hansard Staff*—Reporting Royal Commissions, £250:

Mr. JACOBY: Was it intended by the Government to appoint any Royal Commissions? None were sitting at present.

The PREMIER: The amount on the Estimates was approved in accordance

with arrangements made with the *Hansard* Staff to do all reporting in connection with Royal Commissions, and it was considered by the then Treasurer, who made the arrangement, that it would be much more economical for the remuneration to be £250 per annum, including typing, than to continue the old system. For the five years ended 1907-8 the cost of reporting Commissions was £1,949, and, therefore, it was thought cheaper to pay a lump sum and get the *Hansard* reporters to do any Commissions that might need reporting during the year rather than secure the services of outside shorthand writers and typists.

Mr. Jacoby: A sort of retaining fee?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Item, S. G. Woolner, services keeping sinking fund accounts London Agency, £50:

Mr. JACOBY: There was an item for a similar amount passed under the London Agency. Would the Treasurer give an explanation?

The PREMIER: It was charged to the London Agency previously, and transferred to this vote this year. The amount represented the total cost of keeping the sinking fund account.

Item, Legal Expenses of Election Petitions. Messrs. Carson and Buzacott:

Mr. ANGWIN: Was there any special reason why this election expense should be met in this case?

The PREMIER: The amount had been put down after due consideration by the Government, and to some extent they were guided in their decision by a requisition which was presented and signed by members on both sides of the House. Some of those who did not sign the petition were in favour of the sum being paid, but in view of their position they considered it advisable not to sign it. The result was that the amount had been provided on the Estimates. It was contended that the expenses had been incurred by these members through no fault of their own. It was agreed also that £120 should be received by Mr. Carson and £80 by Mr. Buzacott.

Mr. ANGWIN: The reason for asking for the information was that there were

other cases of a similar nature, and all ought to be treated alike.

Mr. OSBORN: The petition was brought to him for his signature, and being rather a new chum at Parliamentary procedure he refused to sign it, because in his opinion it was not in the best interests that the expenses should be paid by the State. By passing the vote the Committee would be establishing a very dangerous precedent, and as had been referred to by the member for East Fremantle, if the Committee were going to provide funds for these two instances there was no reason why others who had been similarly placed should not also participate.

Mr. Collier: In these cases it was because of the faulty Electoral Act.

Mr. OSBORN: It was nothing of the kind. The member for Geraldton had no option but to take an action at law. The member for East Fremantle too was also compelled to go to law, and it was the same in the case of the member for Coolgardie, but in the case of Mr. Buzacott he was not compelled to contest the case; he could have retired and not incurred the expense. He was ill-advised and did not adopt that course and therefore suffered, and because he suffered for his own stupidity the State was asked to assist him. He (Mr. Osborn) emphatically protested against the item, and hoped it would not be passed. Moreover, there was the danger that such a thing would not end there.

Mr. SCADDAN: The member for Roebourne was apparently most brilliant when he knew nothing of the subject he was talking about. Apparently something had been whispered in his ear by someone who was not prepared to bring the matter forward himself. The member for Roebourne ought to have known that when the Electoral Bill was before the House the member for Kalgoorlie, who was then Attorney General and in charge of the Bill, assured the House that he was making provision in that Bill that in the event of any dispute being taken to the Court of Disputed Returns, the roll would not be questioned by that court, and that any person whose name appeared on that roll would be entitled to vote and his vote would not be questioned. Yet the election

was held and the present Minister for Mines was defeated by seven votes. He lodged a petition and one of the grounds was that persons whose names were on the roll were not entitled to vote, not having the necessary qualifications, and as a matter of fact he went to the extent of employing a surveyor in the Mines Department to survey the boundaries of his electorate. Mr. Buzacott was able to place before the court a copy of *Hansard* showing that the Minister who introduced the Bill had stated definitely that the vote of anyone whose name was on the roll would not be questioned, yet the Court held otherwise. Surely Mr. Buzacott was entitled to defend the case when the House had come to that decision irrespective of what it was thought the Court might do. Mr. Buzacott acted fairly and did not go to the extent of bringing any witnesses, and the costs of the petition were caused through the evidence which was brought against him. The costs against Mr. Buzacott from Mr. Gregory's solicitors amounted before being taxed to the sum of £328, but after being taxed the total was reduced to £297, and every penny was paid, even the surveyor's fees for surveying the boundaries of the electorate. On previous occasions in connection with similar petitions when the court gave a finding it did so on each point and where the petition failed costs were given in every instance. In this case the court gave a decision on one point, sufficient to upset the election. As a matter of fact, and as pointed out, those very people who had been objected to on a previous occasion took part in the next election also. Yet Mr. Buzacott had been compelled to pay the full cost of the petition, and the cost of bringing to Perth, in order to give evidence, those persons who had voted wrongfully. Why should Mr. Buzacott be compelled to bear those costs seeing that he had not been responsible for the mistake? Mr. Buzacott had produced to the court evidence that he had warned his scrutineers and made an announcement on the public platform urging those not entitled to vote to refrain from taking any part in the election: and as Mr. Buzacott had not been responsible, surely it was for the State to bear the whole expense of the

case, seeing that it had been the State department which was at fault. With Mr. Carson's case he (Mr. Scaddan) was not so well acquainted, but he understood that it was also a case of boundaries improperly defined by the department. What protection had hon. members if that condition of affairs was to be allowed to continue? He did not know, nor did the department, the boundaries of certain portions of his own electorate; and if persons living just beyond those boundaries were to vote, and eventually it was shown that they lived outside the boundary, then he would have to bear the cost of any election petition directed against him. Was that proper protection to afford to hon. members? In his opinion the Government ought to bear the whole of the costs of any such case for which the individual was not responsible.

MR. DRAPER: To pass this item without protest would be to acquiesce in a most dangerous precedent. Messrs. Carson and Buzacott, it seemed, had been mulcted in costs under circumstances which, as men, all could regret; but hon. members had something more to consider than the mere personal aspect of a case. Hon. members ought to be most careful about establishing a precedent of that kind. If hon. members would consider the matter they would see that in time to come the precedent would be recognised and the practice would grow, and any person who had been mulcted in the costs of an election petition would, by applying to the House, have those expenses paid by the Government. He could not support any such precedent.

MR. BATH: A parallel case could be found, or at least might be imagined, in respect to the Lands Department. The Lands Department sometimes made errors in regard to boundaries and in regard to people taking up land. These mistakes had been made, and where such a mistake was made by the department, and possibly someone had been illegally deprived of a piece of land, that person had redress against the department. In such a case the member for West Perth would be most consistent, either in his private or in his legal capacity, in pushing that claim to the utmost. In this case the Electoral

Department had made the mistake. It was entirely the mistake of the Electoral Department, both in regard to the Mt. Ida votes and the votes at White Peak, and the hon. member in his legal capacity would be ready to advance a claim for a return of the expense in which a candidate was involved although entirely innocent of the mistake which led to such expense being incurred. Under these circumstances it seemed to him that the precedent which should be established was that where, owing to a mistake on the part of a Government department, people were involved in expense, it was a reasonable thing to look to the department, not for a portion as set down here, but for the total amount of the expense involved.

Mr. KEENAN: This matter had come under his cognisance at the time when he was in charge of the Electoral Department. Hon. members were under a misapprehension when they stated that the two cases were exactly similar. Mr. Carson's case had arisen under the old Act. A certain portion was included in the Geraldton electorate which was improperly in it. After the election, Mr. Carson having been declared returned, his opponent lodged a petition. The rules required particulars to be given, setting forth the names of the electors who had improperly voted; and when the particulars were furnished Mr. Carson became immediately aware that they were objected to because they lived outside the electorate, and it was then his duty to inquire into the truth of the allegation. If Mr. Carson had done so he would have satisfied himself that the allegation was true, and reasonably should no longer have opposed the petition, as Mr. Eddy had done under the same Act and in a somewhat similar case. There would then have been little cost involved, merely the costs of filing the petition and delivering the particulars. Mr. Carson chose to fight the petition. Witnesses were called and Mr. Carson was mulcted in costs. The view he (Mr. Keenan) took at the time was that these costs were incurred by the failure on Mr. Carson's part to perform his duty, that of inquiring into the accuracy of the particulars, because then he would have

found that they were correct; and therefore the Government refused to entertain Mr. Carson's appeal for any grant towards paying the costs of hearing the petition; and the Government properly took credit for their action, and urged that action as an answer to any attack made on them in respect to Mr. Buzacott's case. When the new Electoral Bill was brought in it was intended by Parliament unquestionably that the roll should be finally conclusive as to the right of all electors thereon to vote, but the Court held that the language did not carry out that intent. The roll was conclusive as to the parties who enjoyed the right to be on the roll, but the Court held that persons beyond the electoral boundaries never had the right to be on the roll, and logically could not be on the roll. Mr. Buzacott's case was similar to that of Mr. Carson's. True, neither Mr. Buzacott nor Mr. Carson were to blame; but when particulars were furnished to Mr. Buzacott that certain electors voted who had no right to vote, if he had inquired into the particulars, as was his duty, he would have found the allegation accurate; and when the Government had properly refused to listen to Mr. Carson's claim they could not, with any possibility of consistency, listen to Mr. Buzacott's claim. However, when the Electoral Estimates were under discussion last year the suggestion was made, to which he (Mr. Keenan) having charge of the Department, had assented, that the portion of the costs incurred in proving the limitation of the boundaries of the electorates should be paid by the Government. He did not know whether the sum now on the Estimates was arrived at on that basis, or whether it was merely a round figure in the way of compensation. If it were confined to the one issue, that of paying for expert evidence to prove the boundaries, it would be in accordance with the undertaking he had given the Committee, and not being in a position to say whether it was so or not he could not criticise the item, but on a general question of whether parties who involved themselves in law, perhaps under a misconception of their legal rights, or because their personal positions required them to go into court, should

come to Parliament and seek compensation, in his opinion the principle was not wise.

Mr. DRAPER: What were the expenses covered by the item? It was obvious any expenses incurred in connection with the limitation of boundaries were not properly costs but were expenses that should be defrayed by the Electoral Department.

Mr. COLLIER: The member for Kalgoorlie admitted it was the intention of the House, and the hon. member at the time the Bill was passed so informed the House, that the roll as printed should be conclusive evidence of the right of the persons whose names appeared thereon to vote; but how could the hon. member contend that Mr. Buzacott's case was similar to Mr. Carson's? Mr. Carson's case was under the old Act; Mr. Buzacott's case was under the present Act; and Mr. Buzacott had no means of informing himself, when the petition was lodged, that the intention of the House and of the member for Kalgoorlie was not correct. Mr. Buzacott could not ascertain this until the Court gave judgment. Even had Mr. Buzacott known that the old boundaries were wrong, still, relying on the view taken by the House and upon the case stated by the member for Kalgoorlie that the names on the roll were those of people entitled to vote, Mr. Buzacott felt himself justified in going to court. The decision of the Court upset that opinion. Mr. Buzacott could have withdrawn from the position earlier and thus avoided some of the costs, but neither he nor this House then knew the position, and did not realise it until the decision of the Court was given. His position was very different from that of the member for Geraldton.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The case of Mr. Carson was in no way similar to that of Mr. Buzacott; the former action took place under the old Electoral Act and the latter under the new Electoral Act. In introducing the latter the then Attorney General, the present member for Kalgoorlie, explained that he had made provision for relieving candidates from expense under disputed returns, and said, "We have made one attempt in this Court of Disputed Returns to save candidates

from being unnecessarily harassed, and possibly being made the victims of circumstances over which they have no control, by providing under Clause 160, that the court shall deem the roll conclusive evidence that the persons enrolled were on the date of the compilation of the roll entitled to be enrolled." Those were the words of the then Attorney General, and Mr. Buzacott relied upon them. He looked upon the Attorney General as an honest man. He (Mr. Underwood) would not say Mr. Buzacott was mistaken, and he would vote the money in order to prove that fact. If the then Attorney General had said what he thought was true a mistake was made, and Mr. Buzacott should not be mulcted in costs. Up to then Mr. Buzacott had no chance of knowing the Attorney General did not mean what he said.

The CHAIRMAN: The member must withdraw that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD withdrew. According to the speech made by the then Attorney General Mr. Buzacott could do nothing else but fight the case. There was no other possible chance for him. The Judge gave his decision, but his experience of judges was that what they would say was always so uncertain that a man could fairly gamble on it.

Mr. OSBORN: The Premier might inform the Committee whether the item included other expenses than the actual defining of the boundaries in connection with the two electorates.

The PREMIER: The petition as presented was for something like £400 and the Government, after going into the matter carefully, considered it would be a fair proposition to put on the Estimates the sum of £200. So far as he recollected that was principally for expenses in connection with the special inquiry in connection with defining the boundaries of the electorates.

Mr. SCADDAN: One point was lost by the member for Pilbara in his reference to the statement of the then Attorney General. That gentleman did not only go to the extent of making the provision to the effect that the Court of Disputed Returns should take the roll as evidence that the persons whose names

appeared thereon at the time of the issue of the roll were entitled to vote, but he also said that supplementary rolls would be issued every three months. A supplementary roll had for its object the striking off of those persons who had lost their qualification and the adding of new names. It was provided that every three months a new roll would be issued and certified to as being correct. In such circumstances surely members would not say that Mr. Buzacott was not entitled to that point, at least, to meet the claim made by his opponent Mr. Gregory. No one was aware of the fact that the Attorney General was not correct in his interpretation of his own Bill until the Court decided. If he had been consulted as to the petition being lodged in Court, the Attorney General must have stood by the words he used in this Chamber. If he made the statement in all good faith as a legal gentleman, he should at least be able to realise that a layman would take his word for it. Until the Court gave their decision Mr. Buzacott was not aware, nor was any other layman and very few legal men, that persons who were on the roll would be unable to vote. If the Court had followed the precedent laid down in the Holmes and Angwin case, Mr. Gregory would have been compelled to pay portion of the costs. The decision was given on one point only, and as usual, if 20 points are submitted and the Judge can find one on which to give a decision he lets the 19 others remain undecided, and so permits 19 points to be brought up on future occasions for the benefit of the lawyers. That went on every day. When one asked for a decision on the undecided points a Judge would say, "Wait till they come before me." That meant more Judges, lawyers, and expense to the community generally. This was the case in connection with the Buzacott appeal. The Judge gave a decision on one point which upset the election, and Mr. Buzacott had to pay the cost of bringing all Mr. Gregory's witnesses to the Court to give evidence on points which were undecided. Surely the member for Roebourne would say that it would be unfair to ask Mr. Buzacott to bear the whole of the expense of the petition. It was agreed that Mr.

Carson was the victim of circumstances and should receive compensation for the expenses he was put to, but in the case of Mr. Buzacott the Government might have recouped him for the whole of his expenses.

Mr. OSBORN: The member for Ivanhoe had not thrown any light on the matter. He (Mr. Osborn) had not moved as a personal matter; he had nothing against either Mr. Buzacott or Mr. Carson but it was a case in which a precedent should not be established. He might have made himself plainer if some of the "children" on the opposite side of the House had gone outside to play.

The CHAIRMAN: That remark would have to be withdrawn.

Mr. OSBORN: It would be withdrawn with pleasure but at least hon. members opposite should restrain their mirth and permit a member's remarks to be heard.

Item, Members of Parliament representing electorates beyond limit of State railway system—grant towards travelling expenses, £120:

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.26 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 17th November, 1909.

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

QUESTION—OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Is the Premier aware that penniless persons on making application to the Commonwealth for old-age pensions to relieve the State from the amounts paid by the State,