

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 14th September, 1921.

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

QUESTION—FRUIT FOR JAM AND CANNING.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has his attention been drawn to the article in the "Industrial Australian and Mining Standard" of the 1st instant, dealing with the decontrol of sugar—showing the serious financial position of the several jam and canning factories of Australia and the serious position in which the orchardists will be placed if the price of sugar is not reduced to parity? 2, Does he consider it advisable, in the interests of the orchardists of this State, that the establishment of jam and canning factories should be encouraged? 3, Will he have an inquiry made as to the prospects of the orchardists of this State in their disposal of the ensuing season's crop—with a view to making any necessary representations to the Federal Government.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes; by the hon. member's question. The matter was thoroughly discussed at the recent Australasian Conference of Fruit Growers, and a resolution was passed requesting the Commonwealth Government to make Australian sugar available at world's parity. 2, Yes. 3, Yes.

QUESTION—S.S. "PENGUIN," SALVAGE.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What quantity and value of fittings was salvaged from the s.s. "Penguin"? 2, Were any fittings and tackle removed by unauthorised persons? 3, Were such persons Government employees? 4, Are any of the persons concerned still in Government employment? 5, What action, if any, was taken in the matter?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Numerous fittings and gear were salvaged, approximate value £2,000. 2, Yes; several small things, but of no great value. 3, Yes. 4, Yes. 5, The persons concerned were reprimanded.

QUESTION—RAILWAY FARES, BOULDER-BROWN HILL.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Commissioner of Railways to increase the fares on the Boulder-Brownhill loop line? 2, If so, what is the reason for this section being specially selected for increases at the present juncture?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Fares have been increased from the 12th inst. 2, Owing to the heavy losses in the working of this line, and the fact that when increases were made in other fares, the fares on this line were not increased.

QUESTION—POTATO CROP, LOSSES.

Mr. MONEY asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the financial loss to the potato growers and the State in 1920, what steps have the Agricultural Department taken to conserve the November potato crop this year to prevent similar losses through over-production at that period?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The Director of Agriculture is at present visiting, and conferring with potato producers in the South-West as to the most practical method of conserving the approaching season's crop. A large amount of storage space will be available for producers this year at the Fremantle freezing works. Experiments will be made by the Department this year on a limited scale in regard to—(a) Methods of stacking, and temperature in cool storage; (b) By the process of dehydration; (c) Any other method of preservation which may offer a solution of the problem.

BILL—BUILDING SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Report Stage.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [4.48]: I move—

That the report of the Committee be adopted.

Mr. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.49]: I move an amendment—

That the Bill be recommitted for the further consideration of Subclause 6 of Clause 4.

Under the clause, no machinery driven by a motor of less than one horse-power will be subject to inspection. The latest method of driving machinery by electric current is to have small separate motors for each machine. Many of those motors are of less than one horse-power. Under the subclause, practically all the machinery in printing offices would be exempt from the operations of the measure. This applies with particular force to the more dangerous machines, such as the platen machine, which has been the cause of more accidents than any other machine in the printing industry. They are driven by very small motors attached direct to the machine, without shafts. The subclause would exempt all those from the operations of the Bill. I desire to have those machines included, even though each machine be driven by a motor of less than one horse-power.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [4.40]: I also wish to have the Bill recommitted, for the purpose of further considering Clause 15, relating to female attendants in passenger lifts.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for South Fremantle might include that clause in his motion.

Mr. McCallum: Yes, I will do so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [4.41]: I ask the hon. member not to press his motion, because it will mean that we shall have to take the report stage to-morrow and the third reading on Tuesday, and so the Council will not get the Bill until Wednesday or Thursday. I have already advised the Minister in the Council that I desire to make an amendment in the clause referred to by the hon. member, the amendment being to add after the word "motor" in the first line the words "or motors," and to insert between "the" and "power" in the next line the word "aggregate." Under that amendment, if there happen to be two or more machines exceeding in the aggregate one horse power, an inspection will have to be made. My amendment will fully meet the hon. member's point. As for the amendment proposed by the member for West Perth, I am in accord with her desire, and I can arrange to have the amendment made in the Council. But to save time I should like to avoid the proposed recommitment.

Mr. McCallum: I will accept the Minister's assurance and withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Question put and passed; report of Committee adopted.

BILL—HOSPITALS.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary and read a first time.

RETURN—RAILWAYS CONSTRUCTED, COST, ETC.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [4.46]: I move—

That there be laid upon the Table of the House a return showing the cost of construction of each railway throughout the State and the profit or loss, as the case may be, of each branch during the past three years.

At the present time no one seems to know which lines are paying and which are not. I think we have a right to some information on this point. The other night the Minister for Railways pointed out that there were certain railways which it would be well to remove from their present situation and replace by a system of motor transport. I was glad to hear him make that statement, because that is the principal object I have in view in moving this motion. There are a number of railways which people say do not pay, and it would set at rest the minds of the community if a return of this description were made public. Certainly, the publication of such information could do no harm. It might be better to remove some of the existing lines and use them for development work in other parts of the country. I am asking for a return for a period of three years only, in order that it might not be opposed on the ground of expense, as it might be if I asked for figures extending over a longer period. I trust that the Minister will take this point into consideration. The motor service would be infinitely better for the school children, especially for those who have to be transported to the more or less consolidated schools which it is proposed to have to a great extent in future. If we can save in one direction as well as in the other direction, surely it is a matter worthy of consideration.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [4.49]: May I suggest to the hon. member that if the motion was amended somewhat, she would probably get the information she desires and information which would be useful to members of the House generally. It is impracticable and I might say impossible to give effect to the motion as submitted. We cannot provide this information because we do not keep sectional returns of the profit and loss on the railway system. We abandoned this practice some years ago. What we could supply is information showing the capital cost of each railway. After all, the cost of construction might be misleading, because some of the lines were laid down as light lines and afterwards improved at a very heavy capital cost. Therefore, the capital cost and not the cost of construction

should be shown. Also the hon. member should ask that the return show the freight earned and the passengers carried during the three years, which information we could supply. If she will also insert the words "if practicable," I shall have no objection to the motion. Otherwise, it would be futile to carry the motion as worded. I cannot give an assurance that it is possible to show the profit and loss on each branch, because we do not keep sectional returns.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you did, we would have cheaper rates between Perth and Fremantle.

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the member for West Perth ask for leave to amend her motion accordingly?

Mrs. Cowan: If I cannot get anything better, I am prepared to accept the Minister's suggestion.

Mr. J. Thomson: I think it will be throwing money away to get out such a return.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion will then read—

That there be laid upon the Table of the House a return showing the capital cost of each railway throughout the State and, if practicable, the freight earned and the passengers carried on each branch during the past three years.

Hon. P. Collier rose.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member for Boulder opposing the leave to amend?

Hon. P. Collier: Yes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be amended?

Hon. P. Collier: No.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then the original motion must stand.

Mr. J. THOMSON (Claremont) [4.56]: I think the member for West Perth might have brought forward something which we could support. The preparation of this return will have the effect of bringing the deficit up a few hundred pounds higher than it is to-day. The return will be of no benefit to anybody, and therefore I oppose the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.57]: I oppose the motion, not because I desire to prevent the member for West Perth from obtaining the information which she desires, but on the ground advanced by the Minister for Railways. It is not only impracticable but impossible to supply the information asked for. Seeing that separate accounts of the profit and loss on the different sections of our railways are not kept, it would be useless for the House to carry the motion. The Railway Department has not the information, and it would be unable to comply with the resolution.

Mrs. Cowan: The department must have some information or the Minister for Railways could not have given us the particulars he did the other night with regard to branch railways when he said that he thought a system of motor traction should be adopted.

The Minister for Mines: I can give particulars of the freights earned and the passengers carried.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister did not give any information as to the profit and loss; he gave particulars of the passengers carried and of the tonnage carried. He could not give information regarding the loss. It is of no use the House carrying a motion which it would be impossible for the department to comply with. If the department made an attempt to supply the information, it would of necessity be incomplete. It is very undesirable that the House should call for any return which would result in the supplying of information which was not correct, because such information would mislead the members of this House and the public generally. Whatever we do in our desire to obtain the fullest information, we should at least always be sure that the information given to the public through this Chamber is correct and reliable. This ought not to be the channel for imparting information to the public which is not dependable. The hon. member can easily ascertain the capital cost of the railways from the public accounts issued each year, as well as the capital cost of all public work carried out in the State.

Mrs. Cowan: I want to know which branches of the railway service are paying, and which are losing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I gather that the hon. member is not so anxious to ascertain the capital cost of the railways as she is to find out the profit or loss on the different sections. Ever since I have been a member similar motions have been brought forward, all having been opposed by the Minister for Railways on the ground that the information could not be supplied by the Department. I agree that it would be informative to the public to know what loss has been incurred on the different sections of railways. Such sections as the Phillips River-Ravensthorpe railway, and the Marble Bar railway, neither of which is connected with the main system, show the profit and loss.

Mr. Underwood: They used to be advertised.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The loss incurred on these two isolated railways used to appear in the annual report of the Commissioner. It would be difficult for the Department to keep such figures as are suggested by the motion, even if it were desired to do so. It would also be difficult to estimate the loss upon one section of the railways, or to estimate the profit from goods in transit from one section to another. It would be almost impossible with any degree of accuracy to estimate the cost of transport of goods while they were passing from one section to another. The branch lines in agricultural districts may show a loss on the year's operations, but were it not for these branch lines, there would not be the same amount of traffic over the main lines. It would,

therefore, be misleading to show that branch lines had made a loss when they have been used as feeders for the main lines. The system in this respect is so involved that it is impossible to get any reliable return from the Department, and on that ground alone I must oppose the motion.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [5.7]: I hope the motion will be carried in an amended form. I have held for some time that we should have more information than is supplied by the Commissioner. We occasionally get some plain, bald statement, but I am not prepared to accept such statements for my part. If we could get the figures dissected we should probably find that the metropolitan-suburban traffic had shown a considerable profit; but that is always denied. The Minister has offered to obtain the fullest information possible under the present system of book-keeping in the Railway Department, and to meet that case I move an amendment—

That after the word "the" at the end of the second line the word "capital" be inserted, that in the third line the words "construction of" be struck out, and that after "State" in the fourth line the words "if practicable the freights earned and passengers carried" be inserted.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.9]: Just outside this Chamber there are scores of books which show the capital cost of our railways. We get three or four volumes every year containing this information. There is no necessity, therefore, to go to the trouble of getting that from any other source, unless we are too lazy to obtain the information for ourselves. If we are too lazy, we should employ someone else to get it for us.

The Minister for Mines: The information is also on the Table.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The information required is forthcoming even to the end of June last. We have repeatedly been told that it is impossible for the Railway Department to supply the information asked for in the motion. It cannot be shown which lines are paying and which do not pay, the only exception being the isolated railways already referred to. I would point out that the main lines are made to pay because of the traffic that occurs on the branch lines. If it were not for the branch lines they would not pay. If it were possible to obtain from such a return as has been suggested the exact position of our railways I would not oppose the motion, but to put a number of officers on to do this work, and place information before the House which would not even then give us a correct statement of the position, would be a waste of time, and it is better that we should be without it. If the Minister intends to arrange for a different system of book-keeping—

The Minister for Mines: That is why I suggested the words "if practicable."

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The present system would not permit of the information being given.

The Minister for Mines: The department would have to keep a catalogue of every parcel that was handled.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And allocate the goods over every section.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The return would be quite useless, and I must vote against the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder—on amendment) [5.12]: I hope the House will not carry the motion in its amended form. It is no use spending time in discussing a motion which it is known cannot lead to the information required being given to us. On the desk of every hon. member is an interim report from the Railway Department showing the capital cost of the whole of the railways in the State.

Mr. Pickering: And the cost per mile.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. If any hon. member wishes to ascertain the cost of each section he can do so from the public accounts.

Mrs. Cowan: There would be no cost attached to getting that information.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Some clerk would have to be employed to get it out.

Mr. Underwood: He would have nothing else to do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I refuse to believe that there are men in the Railway Department who have so little to do that they can spend their time in supplying information to members who are too lazy to get it for themselves.

Mrs. Cowan: I object to that. I have moved a motion for this return.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member rising to a point of order?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was referring to the hon. member who moved the amendment. He is old enough to know better.

Mrs. Cowan: I do not think he is too lazy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not accuse the hon. member at all. The member for Pilbara moves an amendment without giving any reason for doing so, whereas his experience should show him that it would merely mean placing work on the shoulders of the department when it is not warranted. What is the use of pursuing a matter which cannot come to anything? In order to get out the information, officers of the department would be specially employed throughout the year, and perhaps hundreds of others would have to be brought in to complete the business.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany)—on amendment [5.15]: I have tried to make the House understand that it is not possible, or at all events not practicable, to supply the information in the form set forth by the motion. We cannot tabulate profit and loss on the various sec-

tions of our railway system. However, I have no objection to the amendment, which asks for the capital cost—that information being available. As regards the remainder of the motion, I desire the insertion of the words “if practicable” because I do not wish to be instructed by the Chamber to furnish information which cannot be obtained. I really suggested the amendment out of the goodness of my heart, out of a desire that the member for West Perth should carry the first motion that she moves in this Chamber. Very frequently a Minister, when opposing a motion of this character, is accused of opposing it not because the information cannot be supplied, but because he wants to prevent hon. members from securing information. The insertion of the words “if practicable” would prevent the possibility of my being charged, towards the end of the session, with refusing to supply information ordered by the Chamber. The insertion of those words would prevent my being placed in a false position; I have no desire to be accused of refusing to furnish information that has been ordered.

Mrs. Cowan: That is a good answer; but the information should be available.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and negatived.

RETURN—FORESTS DEPARTMENT, STATISTICS.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.19]: I move—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing: 1, The revenue derived from forestry in Western Australia during 1920-1921, and the expenditure. 2, The revenue and expenditure for the same period in the States of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, and South Australia. 3, The amount of timber cut in Western Australia during 1913, and exported, the value of that timber, and the revenue derived therefrom. 4, The figures, on similar lines, for the year 1920-1921. 5, The value of sleepers exported in the year 1920-21, and the quantity. 6, The royalty collected by the Forests Department from—(a) Millars' Timber and Trading Company, Limited; (b) permit holders. 7, The average price paid to private owners as royalty for sleepers.

A week or two ago I submitted a series of questions asking for the information embraced in this motion. I very much desired that the questions should be answered at the time, but I was notified that the information must be asked for by way of motion for a return. Personally, I fail to see the justification for such an attitude, because the questions were simple, and most of the information, I understand, can be furnished at very little cost and with very little labour.

The Minister for Mines: You asked for information concerning the Forests Depart-

ments of all the other States; you can get that information just as well as I can.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not a responsibility of the Government.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. PICKERING: Nevertheless, the information might have been in the possession of the department controlled by the Minister. At all events, I desired the information in order that we might be enabled to decide whether the amount being expended on forestry in Western Australia was or was not greater than the amounts expended on that purpose in the other States. The information can be obtained, and I hope the House will carry my motion. The revenue derived from forestry in this State during the year 1920-21, and the expenditure for the same year, must be available in the annual report of our Forests Department, which is laid on the Table of this House. I ask for the quantity of timber cut in 1913, and the quantity exported, and the value of that timber, and the revenue derived by the State therefrom, because I want to draw a comparison between that year, being the apex year prior to the initiation of a forest policy in this State, and the year 1920-21, so that the House may have an idea of what has resulted in the interim. I think it will be agreed that such information is of importance to hon. members. I ask for the quantity and the value of the sleeper export for 1920-21, because our timber is exported mainly in the form of sleepers, which represent some of our most valuable timber in the least advantageous form. It seems impossible to ascertain the value of the sleeper export. All the information that the Customs Department can supply is that the value ranges between £4 10s. and £8 per load. Now, I understand that the price paid for sleepers delivered at the railway siding is about £6 10s. per load. Thus it would seem that some wrong values have been furnished to the Customs Department regarding export timber. I do not think any timber leaving this State to-day goes at a price of £4 10s. per load. It is unfair that the Customs Department should be furnished with statements which are not a true reflex of the export value of our timber. Then I want to know the amount of royalty collected by the Forests Department from Millars' Timber and Trading Co., Ltd., on the one hand and from permit holders on the other. Of necessity, the whole trend of our forestry policy depends very largely on the amount of royalty paid to the department by those operating in the industry. It has been suggested, in this connection, that the amount paid in royalty by certain companies is in excess of the value of the timber, and that therefore the present position is unjust to them, more especially when, comparatively, so little is paid by Millars' Co. in the shape of rents. I am of opinion that a considerably larger amount would be collected in royalties if all the timber leases and concessions in the State were placed on the same basis. I am satisfied that on the

whole the amount collected by the Forests Department in the form of royalty is much below the actual value of the timber. In these parlous times, when the State is confronted by such serious financial difficulties, every possible avenue should be exploited in the collection of revenue to which the State is justly entitled. I understand that in no instance where royalty is paid to a private person, is the rate so low as that received by the Conservator of Forests. If that is correct, there is ample justification for an investigation of the position. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will agree to the furnishing of the information. If we are to make a success of our forestry policy, the activities of the Forests Department must be placed upon an adequate footing. A considerable amount of money must necessarily be spent in the carrying out of the obligations imposed by the Forests Act, and in the execution of the working plans submitted to Parliament by the Conservator. I am convinced that if the finances of the Forests Department are placed on a proper basis, the resultant employment in the development of our forest areas will go far towards increasing the settlement of our country districts and towards affording work to the large number of alleged unemployed.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Three-fifths of the revenue collected by the Forests Department is being spent on the forests now.

Mr. PICKERING: That may be so; but in some Australasian States the whole of the revenue derived by the Government from the forests is spent on the forests. If we are furnished with the figures of the other States in this regard, it will be seen, I think, that most of those States spend a larger amount on forestry policy than Western Australia does. When it is suggested that Western Australia should reduce the amount spent on forestry—

Mr. O'Loghlen: Has anyone suggested that?

Mr. PICKERING: The Premier has suggested it. At all events, the hon. gentleman suggested that too much was being spent on forestry.

Mr. O'Loghlen: It all depends on whether the money is being spent wisely.

Mr. PICKERING: The hon. member was not here when the Premier spoke, and I cannot read the Premier's speech to him. I would strongly advocate that as much money as practicable should be spent in the direction indicated, and that is the reason why I ask for information on the subject. If we were to establish the development of our forestry policy on sound lines, we would afford considerable employment to those of our new settlers whom we are endeavouring to place in the South-West. For certain periods of the year it is difficult for those new settlers to employ their time profitably. Now, in all other parts of the world where a sound forestry policy is being carried out, considerable employment is afforded to the peasantry by that policy during seasons when

they could not otherwise be profitably employed. That fact has been demonstrated very clearly. Therefore I hold that coincidentally with our policy of settling the South-West should run a fixed and determinate policy of developing the forestry industry. The labour in that industry is not so arduous that very many men could not engage in it. I trust, therefore, that hon. members of the Opposition, who are anxious that the unemployed difficulty should be relieved as far as possible, will recognise that in carrying my motion they will be assisting to obtain information which will tend to assist in the solution of the unemployed problem. When I hear members condemn the practice of the present Conservator in providing roads and other facilities in the forests, I am reminded of the fact that in all I have read on the subject of forestry it is consistently advocated that roads and other facilities of that nature should be provided in forests. The working plans of the Conservator have, it is true, to be submitted to Parliament for approval; but this State pays a large salary to the Conservator for the specific purpose that he shall give us the benefit of his knowledge of the subject which he has made his speciality.

Hon. P. Collier: Are we all getting the benefit of that knowledge equally, though; or is it the exclusive privilege of some people?

Mr. PICKERING: The only knowledge that I have gained in this connection is knowledge that I have had to seek for myself. Notwithstanding what the Minister for Mines said in reply to the member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) on the last motion, the fact remains that it is only with the utmost difficulty we can get information from any Minister.

The Minister for Mines: You have never asked me for this information.

Mr. PICKERING: I hesitate to ask the Minister controlling the Forests Department any questions because I fear his evasive replies will discourage me too much.

The Minister for Mines: I do not want to check you.

Mr. PICKERING: I hope the Minister will agree to furnish this information. I feel sure he has the information ready to place upon the Table of the House. In the circumstances I do not desire to labour the question.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [5.32]: I anticipate that there will not be much difficulty in providing the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) with the information he requires under most of the headings embodied in the return he is asking for, and particularly regarding three of the items. There will probably be a little difficulty in getting information dealing with the value and quantity of sleepers exported during the year 1920-21. There will possibly be that difficulty because the State is a big trader competing with other firms in the timber indus-

try. Naturally, both the State and the private traders will be reluctant to give the export values of timber sent out of the country. I do not know whether the Minister, if he agrees to the proposition, will suggest the addition of the words "if practicable." The moving of this motion affords me an opportunity to clear up any doubt regarding my attitude on the question of royalties. I do not know whether the member for Sussex is wearing out his welcome as a mover of motions, judging by the fact that this motion was not seconded promptly from his side of the House. The information he seeks, however, provided it is procured, will be a valuable guide to the proposed committee which he desires to investigate every phase of forestry management.

The Minister for Mines: Could not that committee get this information equally as well?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes; probably one motion would have sufficed. At the same time we may not reach the other proposal again, as it is well down on the Notice Paper.

The Minister for Mines: You will reach it all right.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The idea of the member for Sussex is to get information to buttress the policy of the Conservator of Forests, particularly during recent weeks. I will deal with that later as I proceed with my remarks. I hope that whatever inquiry is instituted, it will not be a restricted one, but that it will be an inquiry into the whole ramifications of the Forests Department, not only into the question of the extension of leases, in which the royalty aspect is bound up, but into the fixation of royalty covering the whole State during the different periods of the permits, which have been extended. I hope the committee will inquire into the huge expenditure which, wisely or otherwise, has been disbursed by the Forests Department. I have letters questioning the expenditure that has been going on and indicating that it has involved a foolish waste of money. I desire that any inquiry which is made should go into the question of the establishment of the tuart mill at a large cost by the department. The construction of the Mundaring-road has come up for discussion at different times. That road has been adversely criticised, and, although the member for Sussex may say that expensive and extensive roads are necessary for the furtherance of forest culture, there are practical men who say that a huge amount of money has been wasted on the Mundaring-road. That applies to the Sawyer's Valley-road firebreak as well. It would be as well for the inquiry to be extended to deal with the effect of regulations imposed by the department. After all, while I may be prompted to support in every possible direction public officials who feel obliged to take a strong stand from time to time, we must consider that businesses have to be carried on, that workers are obliged to earn their bread and butter, and so on. I will demonstrate how some of the foolish regulations of the For-

ests Department have had a hampering effect not only upon one aspect of the timber industry but upon the whole of that industry.

Mr. Money: Are not the regulations framed by the Conservator of Forests?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Of course they are framed by the Conservator. The original proposal for the extension of leases left no doubt about the opinion of Parliament. I have a very strong idea that the Conservator of Forests framed the Bill which was presented to members on that occasion, or at least played a very pronounced part in the measure which was introduced by the ex-Attorney General. The whole of his speech on that occasion, extending over nearly three hours, was read by the ex-Attorney General. It was not his practice to read his speeches. I think the Conservator was lacking at that time in not making some more definite provision governing the extensions of leases. The original proposal was to extend them not in accordance with any prescribed royalty, but on a rental basis. The fact that the State revenue aspect was improved compared with the proposal under the original scheme, was largely due to the Leader of the Opposition. There is no doubt about that point. Parliament at the time intended to take into consideration the period some of the companies had had to close down their mills, the entire absence of transport or any market, due to the war conditions, and that there should be an extension of the leases because of those disabilities. I believe now that the time has arrived when we are entitled to review the position. Whatever board or committee of inquiry is appointed, I believe that the position should be reviewed from the standpoint that the position has changed and Parliament is justified in authorising a review of the whole question. I am aware that in any British community contracts are regarded as sacred. In Western Australia in the early days there were some people who took up large areas of land and they were entitled to believe that, provided they carried out their contract, no radical alteration would be made affecting their financial position to any extent. Similarly, people took up land, which included some of the finest areas in the State, and secured it at a peppercorn rental. Later on the economic position changed; there were men who were land hungry and the demand went forth that these people with the large holdings should disgorge or utilise their land. Again, men erected condensers in different parts of the State. Subsequently it was necessary to lay down water mains past their holdings, with the result that the living of the men with the condensers was gone, and their assets and investments went for naught. Any committee of inquiry should give consideration to the position of the timber trade since the passing of the Act and the effect it has had upon that trade. The effect is seen to-day when timber has increased in price, and there is something in the nature of a timber boom. Those companies that have benefited by the generous measure

passed by Parliament, have been able to reap a much larger revenue than they anticipated. I have figures giving the increased prices of timber in the various grades and these shows that timber is 115 per cent. dearer to-day than it was in earlier times. The committee of inquiry should make some allocation whereby people who get the benefit from the extension of these leases, shall contribute something more to the revenue than they are doing to-day. That is only a fair proposition.

The Minister for Mines: That is the position under the extensions which have been granted. They have been granted subject to the prescribed royalty, and that royalty can be varied.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The position to-day is intolerable. Either Millars' royalty must go up or their competitors must go down. I can quote other firms, but it is foolish to say that Millars' would surrender their leases to-day if they did not know what the royalty in the future is to be. To-day there is an element of uncertainty which would drive any firm into the bankruptcy court unless they had a guarantee that the royalty would be fixed on a uniform basis and some idea of what that royalty would be. It appears to me that the Conservator of Forests, not being able to get a concessionaire, vented his spleen and spite on those he could get at. There is the case of Bunning Bros. That firm is operating in poor country compared with that held by Millars'. Bunning Bros. are operating away from the trunk line. They did not get in on the ground floor, so to speak. They had a mill at Noggerup, which had to be closed down during the war. They had another mill which, however, was burnt down. Owing to the scarcity of material, they had to re-erect their mill. They dismantled the Noggerup mill and transported their machinery, rails and so on, to the other site. They were obliged to start this mill after the war. The firm spent £11,000 in equipping the mill and they finished the task on the 29th January. On the 30th January their time expired and on the 1st February an increase in the royalty was imposed, raising it from 2s. to 6s. per load. To-day there are firms that are having a pretty hard time. I do not refer to Millars', because they are in a better position to some extent. The firms I refer to never know where they are from one year's end to another. The particular firm I have referred to, however, have not been able to get the term of their permit extended. Other firms, including Trees Ltd., the Wilgarup Mills, and Whittaker's have received an extension of their permits for a period of 10 years in accordance with the law. The Conservator, however, is a law unto himself and has extended some permits from year to year.

The Minister for Mines: Some of the extensions were granted before the passing of the Act.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I have looked into that phase. Some were and some were

not. Suppose we did not extend the leases, have we prepared for the consequent alterations? Millars' have to cut out and some of their areas are not capable of being cut out in the time their leases have to run. By putting on double shifts, of course, they can tear through the forests. If this is the position, where is the estimate of royalty, furnished by the Conservator of Forests, to come from? Rightly or wrongly, I believe that the Conservator's statement, in which he furnished an estimate indicating that the receipts would amount to over two million pounds, is mere moonshine. I do not see how it is possible for the Conservator to give an estimate of royalties to be received in the future, when we have regard to the cut out country, with its heart torn out by firms anxious to rush the business through and make the break-up value of their plant as favourable as possible. With these conditions, how can he get any such revenue? If he has based his estimates on the present abnormal prices, I think he is wrong. Timber is hard to buy to-day and it has risen to an extortionate price. There is a shortage in every locality.

Mr. Pickering: You cannot get it back like wheat.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Not to the same extent but at the same time it would be foolish to anticipate that the price of wheat will remain at 9s. per bushel for the next decade. Regarding the timber trade, however, the position to-day is that South Africa has booked up every transport available till next March. There are people who anticipate that after March there will be a slump. I hope their fears will not be realised. If the Conservator has taken as his basis the present royalty paid by private owners, I contend he has put forward a misleading statement. The member for Sussex is getting in royalty 21s. a load, and to get that in abnormal times for sleepers, men have taken out the best sleepers where perhaps it would not pay to put up a sawmill to operate the remainder of the timber. The position is that Mr. Lane-Poole on the one hand is collecting the highest royalty ever secured from sleepers, and on the other hand he is declaring that timber cutters shall not exist. He says that the sleeper cutter is not an economic factor in production. Either one is right or one is wrong. He goes to the other extreme with this abnormal revenue of two millions, which I do not think he can secure, and certainly not under the conditions operating to-day.

Mr. Pickering: What was the royalty prior to the war?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It varied considerably. Instead of £1 1s. a load, it may have been 2s., 5s., or 7s. The position as it appears to me is that Millars' have intimated their desire to keep on in business and have therefore taken the extension. If it is desirable that Millars' should end up at the time their lease expires, well and good. Under the present system of lease, one firm

is as good as another to carry on operations in Western Australia. I have pointed out that the revenue the Conservator proposes to get is in my opinion absolutely misleading. When the hon. member spoke on his motion I was just out of one hospital where I had been for eight or 10 days, and I can assure him that I have not had my facts from the Conservator. In fact, I am not at the Conservator's headquarters and I have not been fed by any material from that source. I am using merely a little common sense and what facts I am in possession of from my knowledge of the district, to convey to hon. members that in my opinion the estimate of the Conservator is misleading and astray. He has put it up at a time when rates are paid to private owners on rush business, and at a time when the timber industry is most prosperous, and he has given us those figures to cover a stretch of years when not one of us can visualise the future. It strikes me that the Conservator has a peculiar kink in some directions, that he has a hankering for revenue. He is certainly getting a magnificent revenue at the present time, but he is also spending a large amount of money, and his one idea—it may be good if we can afford it—is posterity. I would like to do a lot for the future, but whilst we have to carry on production in Western Australia at the present time, it would be wrong to adopt his policy to kill the business and say we have to think of the future. I believe we should go on producing.

Mr. Pickering: No matter at what cost.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member has made a ridiculous interjection. No member in this House can say that the Conservator has not very extended power. He has more power than any other public servant. He has a seven years' engagement, and receives over £1,000 a year. He has to work under an Act for the framing of which he himself was very largely responsible. How, therefore, can it be said that the Conservator is being crucified? Out of 50 applicants for the position which was given to Mr. Lane-Poole, there might have been others who would not have perpetrated some of the foolish regulations he has framed to apply to the South-West. His desire is for revenue. Certainly the policy of submitting all permits to public tender was the right one to adopt, and it is one that will stand on its merits. But it appears to me that the Conservator is very anxious to get this big revenue, for the more he gets the more he will have to spend. His latest proposal I understand is to charge employees 10s. a year for the firewood which they consume. In the Mundaring district the firewood areas were submitted to public tender, and I have a list in my possession which shows that the allocation of the blocks was unfair and that the penalising provisions which were applied were altogether excessive and irksome. It has been pointed out to me that in the hill country there are a lot of

people who are struggling. They have their horses idle and they must feed those horses, and therefore, seek areas in which to operate. I remember in the early days when eight or 10 of us lads were at home, my father often took up contracts at an unpayable price solely to keep the plant going. Here, owing to the royalty rate imposed by Mr. Lane-Poole in these areas to which I have referred, the men are obliged to pay more than what is a fair thing for the lumber on the ground, to remove which is a good thing. We hear a good deal about the great fight this officer put up against a wealthy combine. It would need an inquiry to ascertain whether the negotiations the Conservator entered into with these people in London were of a friendly character or otherwise. I know this, however, that prior to his going to London that firm gave him a supper and they sent him off hoping that he would be happy ever afterwards. Something, however, has happened. I am not concerned at all as to Millars' attitude or the difference they may have had with the Conservator. I am only concerned in seeing that the State gets the revenue to which it is entitled. I want to know whether Mr. Lane-Poole after taking Millars' before Mr. Canning at the Midland Junction court, where the decision was given against him, sought the permission of the Minister to take the case on to a higher court. The question was whether Millars' concessions were subject to the regulations under the Forests Act.

Mr. Pickering: The file sets it out clearly.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The file sets out that the matter went before the Solicitor General who said that the Act did not override the conditions laid down in the original grant. I believe the Premier is wrong in saying that Mr. Lane-Poole can enforce the regulations on the concession. That is a legal matter and I am not competent to discuss it. The fact remains that Mr. Lane-Poole was beaten at the Midland Junction court, and after that, the matter seemed to have died. Was any further attempt made to determine whether Mr. Lane-Poole was or was not on sound ground? It appears to me that the present position is intolerable. Either the Conservator must go, or the Minister controlling the department must go. If it comes to that, I think I can guess who will go. I have no desire that the Conservator should leave because the position happens to be intolerable. I want the position defined, so that not only will the State know what revenue it is to get, but that it will also see that it is wisely expended, and, further, that the firms operating in Western Australia will have some safeguard and know that they will be able to operate on a fixed royalty instead of having surprises sprung on them. I want to deal with some of the regulations that have been amended by this apostle of forestry who is going to reform Western Australia. I only wish to do so in order to

demonstrate that he has failed to acquire the necessary knowledge since he came here. I have the utmost admiration for his scientific attainments; I am aware that he has a high standing as a forester and that those attainments would be availed of to a greater extent in other parts of the world than in Western Australia. There, however, they have a different type of timber to deal with. Nature has not been so lavish with her gifts elsewhere as she has in Western Australia. The position here is entirely different. Since Mr. Lane-Poole came here he has carried on a very extensive department. I think he has a good staff of officers around him, and I admit that he has done fair work, but the regulations he has drafted from time to time have been such as to make anyone look foolish, and they are regulations that no school boy possessing local knowledge, would ever dream of putting up. First of all, there is the regulation dealing with the stacking of tree tops. That was abandoned at an early stage because it was found to be impracticable. Then there was the desire to wipe out altogether the hewer, and in regard to that I am glad that this House did not agree with the Conservator. I am not going to admit that the hewer is not wasteful in his methods at times, but I can prove that the milling method is also wasteful, particularly at those mills which are far removed from the metropolis, and where small timber cannot be marketed. The figures from the well equipped Forests Departments in the Eastern States show that in Victoria there are 550 hewers, in New South Wales there are over 400 and that there is a similar number operating in Queensland. The Conservators in those States regard the sleeper cutter as an economic factor in forest production. He is able to get matured timber which otherwise would have to rot. Let me give an instance. The Conservator had a request put to him by the Kauri Timber Company operating on an area of country near Nannup. There were 16 men at Nannup, mostly returned soldiers, who required work. They had homes in the town and they were offered this piece of country by the company to work on. The railway line was being pulled up and it was not intended to put it down again. They put up a proposition to the Conservator but he replied that the line would have to come up. I interviewed him on the subject, and his reply was "It does not matter, we shall get that timber in 50 years time." But it was material that would have rotted and wasted and would have been of no value at all in that time. I said "You as a public officer have no right to bring stagnation to this little township of Nannup, which is dependent on the efforts of its citizens, 16 of whom are now requiring employment." He was adamant. He said, "They will have to go somewhere else." I said, "You, on a thousand a year, can afford to keep two homes, but these men can barely afford to keep one." They held an indignation meeting at Nannup,

and as a result the Minister over-ruled the Conservator and the men I refer to operated down there for 2½ years, cutting out a piece of country which it was much better to cut out then than leave for the next 50 years. I would not mind providing for 50 years ahead if we could get along now all right and live. But that is the difficulty with a lot of them. We have a right to look to the future, while at the same time trying to keep afloat in the present. Then we come to one of the latest proposals, namely, to charge the employees for the dead wood lying in the bush, what the people engaged in the forest are obliged to use in their homes, their firewood. The regulations in the Act give the Conservator enormous power. We all realise that. I do not mind giving him power. We have to give the policeman power; we have even to give power to Ministers of the Crown. But the most ridiculous proposition of all was that which contemplated cutting 18 inches from the ground. A lot of the big karri trees in the South-West are not capable of being sawn at 18 inches from the ground. The proposal emanated from Mr. Lane-Poole because in France, Algeria, and other countries where he has been, the trees are quite different, and lend themselves to cutting at that height; and, perhaps, a foot of timber at the bottom of a tree in those countries is a factor to be considered.

The Minister for Mines: Arguing in favour of it, he always puts up the value of the timber left in the stump.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is practically of no value at all. Because in the bulk of the timber the fellers get above the gnarled knots, and the hollow drums where the fire has been inside, and perhaps in order to avoid a pin hole. In such a case, when the log goes to the mill only 15 or 20 per cent. of it is available, because the borer has played havoc in it a few years before. Of course I will admit that some men go up too high. I could understand it if the Conservator brought in a regulation prescribing that the men must not go too high; but to compel them to keep down within 18 inches from the ground is ridiculous. The regulation was being enforced. The word was sent to Greenbushes, and the men there wired to me, asking what they were to do about it. I wired back advising them to take no notice of it. It was the first time I ever gave such advice. They also wired from other centres, and I advised them as I had advised the men at Greenbushes. A week later I saw forest inspector McKay at Pinjarra. He had given notice to all that they were to cut 18 inches from the ground. I came back here, and next day in the corridor I saw the Minister for Works stamping up and down from one end to the other in his denunciation of Mr. Lane-Poole. I knew then that things had been fixed. The Minister told me that it was fixed. But can you, Sir, imagine a man having control of a huge department like that doing such a thing? Only last session I told the House I was delighted to know that pub-

lie feeling towards the Conservator was becoming more favourable.

Mr. Pickering: So it is now.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Does the hon. member think so? Let him go into any timber centre to-day, following on that regulation and others, and find out how the feeling towards the Conservator runs. I helped the Conservator as much with his Bill as did any other member. I had to fight for it in my own party. I tried to help the Conservator all I knew. In conversation I gave him a little advice. I reminded him he was a stranger here. As a matter of fact, there was a peculiar incident about his appointment. There was a large number of applicants, and some lord recommended Lane-Poole.

Hon. P. Collier: That's what appealed to me at the time.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, it did not concern you. Mr. Scaddan was Premier. This Lord Somebody must have thought that Scaddan was an Irish name, because in his letter of recommendation he stressed the point that Mr. Lane-Poole was an Irishman. Anyhow, I went to Mr. Lane-Poole and said, "You are a stranger in a strange land. The people here are harnessed to custom. They do not want any precipitate change. You will find very few people in sympathy with a forest policy." That is undeniable. There has been no interest in the question, and I told Mr. Lane-Poole he would have to try to work up that interest. I pointed out to him that there was no necessity to deprive people of their livelihood by introducing drastic changes. I told him he required to proceed by evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, methods. I have endeavoured to help him during all the years he has been here, and only last session I said I was pleased to know that public feeling was swinging more in his favour. He met me shortly after I made that speech, and asked me if it was correct. I said, "I think it is." However, since then he has brought down these idiotic regulations. I do not want to deal now with the licensing of cows.

The Minister for Mines: I told him repeatedly that he could not do these things by revolutionary methods.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We have conflicting interests. We have on the one hand not only Millars, but all other interested traders in the community who have no deep-rooted conviction on the question of forest conservation. Even the Premier has none. He has not much concern with the forests when—

The Premier: Oh, that is not right.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I want to be quite fair to the hon. member, but his policy of land settlement would sometimes conflict with the forest policy. I have had repeated applications for little pieces of country for cultivation, and in all cases save two I have stood by the forest officer in saying that the block selected was better for timber than for cereal production. I know the South-West thoroughly. There are patches of good country down there, and I say by all means make

them available for cultivation. But the Premier is apt to go a little over the odds in his opposition to forest policy as opposed to land settlement.

The Premier: I am the only Minister who has given Mr. Lane-Poole anything. He told me so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, he was anxious to see you returned by a large majority.

The Premier: No he was not. Far from it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: At all events we have these conflicting interests, which only a select committee will be able to harmonise. The main feature to be inquired into is the working of the Forests Department and the expenditure of the money. Then there is the commandeering by Mr. Lane-Poole of the Lucknow concession from the Minister for Works, when, working under a section of the Act, the Conservator took everything that was there.

The Minister for Mines: He wanted to take the Peel estate.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Of course the Act gives him enormous power, and evidently he is endeavouring to use it. Possibly a committee of inquiry might be able to induce those firms to come under the regulations and adopt a portion of them, which would mean additional revenue for the State and more harmonious working between the Government and the Conservator. It will be the duty of the committee to so fix the royalty that those operating away from trunk lines and far distant from the seaboard will have a reasonable chance of competing on fair lines. It is only about a fortnight since the hon. member gave notice of his motion. Last Wednesday, being private members' day, he moved it. On that day I came out of hospital, where I had spent 10 days. I was not well at the time. I asked the Minister for Mines would the motion be reached that day. He said he did not know, but that if it were it would be adjourned. And so it turned out. I have not had a previous opportunity to speak to the motion. My silence has been misinterpreted, has been taken by some to mean that I did not want to speak to it. It has even been said by officials in the Forests Department and others outside—it has gone out into the camps—that Millars' had me bought, that I was not prepared to stand up for the Conservator. I may say that in all the 14 years I have represented my electorate Millars' have never asked me to do a favour for them. I do not come into contact with them. Not for months have I spoken to one of their managers. But there are in the Forests Department persons who have been using their lying, slanderous tongues in regard to this question, just because I have been silent for a few days for the reason that I was not in a position to speak to the motion. If public life has come to such a pass that a man's silence is to be used by Government officials, it is about time to give it up. I hope the inquiry will be held, and a royalty fixed which will enable the State to get from Millars' the fair return which the revenue is entitled

to in view of the increased price of timber. I hope also that the committee will investigate the whole of the working and ramifications of the Forests Department, and determine whether a public servant is to be dominant in this country, or whether the policy approved by the people is to be carried into effect. If, during the next few days, I get an opportunity to meet some of the people who have been saying that I had not a free mind on this question, I will ram their slanderous lies down their throats.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Seaddan—Albany) [7.30]: I have no intention of attempting, on the motion now before the Chamber, to reply to the speech delivered by the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) when he moved another motion which is now an Order of the day, except to say that I think it was very opportune that the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) should have made the statements he has with the purpose of clearing the atmosphere somewhat, and also of giving what I consider is a lead not only to this House but to the Government in showing the absolute necessity for a thorough inquiry into the operations of the Forests Act passed in 1918. Members are aware that this afternoon the Premier gave notice of his intention to introduce a Bill to provide for the appointment of a Parliamentary standing committee on railways, tramways, and public works and to deal with any matters which may be submitted to it by resolution of either House of Parliament. The object, which will be explained by the Premier, is to enable a standing committee, representative of both Chambers, to be appointed to inquire into matters affecting these particular departments, and any other matter which either Chamber may consider it necessary to have inquired into. What prompts me to mention the matter at this stage is that such a body will have the advantage not possessed by a committee of inquiry appointed in the usual manner as a result of a private member moving for a select committee. The subject will not be prejudged by the committee before it is submitted for investigation. I am afraid that if ever a member had a brief, the member for Sussex holds it, and in my opinion it would be very unfair to the public, to the department, and to Parliament that any committee of the nature suggested by him should inquire on this basis. I welcome an inquiry, because at the moment it is most difficult to be the Minister controlling a department in which a disagreement exists between the person clothed with the powers possessed by the Conservator, and the Government. Whatever may be the result, whether it be in the direction suggested by the member for Forrest, that either the Conservator or the Minister has to go, I am not greatly concerned.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Both of you can remain.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am reminded of a little episode that occurred in Victoria years ago when a certain man got mixed up in a public affair which ended in the man having his neck stretched. The lady was engaged as a barmaid because the publican thought that she would prove a very fine advertisement for his establishment. The wife of the landlord, however, thought that the time had arrived when the services of the barmaid should be dispensed with and she said to her husband—"The time has arrived when either you or the barmaid must leave." The publican proceeded to the bar and addressing the barmaid, said—"Well, my dear, my wife tells me that either you or I have to leave and I tell you that I am going to remain." His story might repeat itself on this occasion. Probably the Conservator or myself will have to go, but I am going to remain. The necessity for an inquiry rests, not so much upon the disagreement which exists between the Conservator and the Government, but on the operations of an Act of Parliament which has been in existence for some time, and the question whether it is in the best interests of the public and whether it is good policy in a democracy that any one individual, particularly a public servant who, to a large extent, is outside of control, should have tremendous powers vested in him. Here let me mention that as regards the attitude adopted by the Conservator, I agree with the member for Forrest that some of the regulations are absurd. After all, the Executive is answerable to the people, and whatever is done on a large or small scale by a public department, the Executive should at all times, through the Parliament, be answerable to the public and move along the lines that the public desire. The member for Forrest has stated that more than once I have gone to the Conservator—and he has done the same thing—and said that while he might be right technically regarding the method of conserving and operating our forests, he must realise that it was necessary to educate the public first of all, not to his standard, but to a certain extent at least in order to enable the public to travel along the road with him. The Conservator could expect to proceed only so far as he was able to take the public with him, and as soon as he left the public far in the rear, the public in a free democracy would complain loudly. It is questionable whether there is a man in Australia who possesses the same technical knowledge of forestry as Mr. Lane-Poole.

Mr. Underwood: He has not proved it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I doubt whether his equal is to be found in Australia.

Mr. Underwood: I say he has not proved it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In order to satisfy the member for Pilbara I will

say that, though the Conservator may have technical knowledge—

Mr. Underwood: That is right—he may have.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Though the Conservator may have technical knowledge, he has to remember that there are people in this community who have been bred in our forests and who know our forests better than he could possibly know them. These people know that the conditions which prevail in our jarrah and karri forests differ from those existing in forests in any other part of the world. Consequently it is probably necessary to introduce here entirely different methods, for we are concerned about the taking of a national asset and using it for the benefit of the community. I am very keen on conserving the best interests of posterity, but I would not cut off my nose to spite my face. I do not want the people to-day to suffer more than is necessary merely for the sake of being able to store up something for posterity. I believe that in this State of Western Australia we are storing up a magnificent asset for posterity, and that in connection with our forests we can continue to do so without causing any very serious injury to the people of to-day. Whatever our opinions may be, if we decide that there shall be an inquiry, let it be a thorough one. Let it be an inquiry by an impartial tribunal. Let it be a Royal Commission, if members prefer it; I do not care what form it takes so long as it is impartial. I have the strongest objection to a member holding a brief and claiming a position on the committee of inquiry, probably as chairman. I even object to such a member having a seat on the committee. Yet this is what is liable to happen because, as the member for Forrest rightly pointed out, evidently the member for Sussex has been able to get information where others have failed. To this sort of thing I strongly object. It would be absurd for me to go to Mr. Lane-Poole as Conservator and ask him to put up an answer to the statements made in this House a week ago by the member for Sussex. The Conservator has not got any answer to offer. Whenever a member of this House makes an attack upon a public servant or upon the administration of any department, it is the custom for the head of the department to take immediate steps to obtain an answer to the statements and place it before the Minister. As a Minister of the Crown I am bound to defend every officer in my department whenever he is attacked by a member of this House, and to continue to defend him until such time as this House or some other tribunal can prove that the officer has committed an error of judgment for which he must answer. Until such proof is forthcoming I am in duty bound, in my capacity as a Minister, to defend such officer, and he is entitled to come to the Minister with his answer. Mr. Lane-Poole has done nothing.

He has not suggested an answer to any one of the statements made by the member for Sussex. Although it was the voice of the member for Sussex speaking in this Chamber, it was really the Conservator of Forests who was putting up his views.

Mr. Pickering: That is not true, and I give it straight to your face.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not suggest, of course, that the Conservator was actually occupying the hon. member's seat, but all the statements uttered by the member for Sussex could equally well have been put up by the Conservator of Forests. This to me is evidence of the fact that the member for Sussex went to the proper place to get his information.

Mr. Pickering: Any of the information could have been got from the returns and papers which have been furnished to this House.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: All I ask is that the hon. member should not consult with the Conservator on these matters. Will the hon. member deny that he did so?

Mr. Pickering: I am not supposed to answer your questions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Then I am justified in the statement I make.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: It is a serious charge against the hon. member.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Conservator of Forests was not in a position to put up a reply to the member for Sussex, because every one of the statements made would have been endorsed by him.

Mr. Underwood: Were they supplied by him?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would not say that. Whatever may be our feelings on this matter, it has to be thrashed out. If there was no other ground for an inquiry, the statement made by the member for Forrest, that officers of the Forests Department were going through the forest districts, and stating that he—a member of this Chamber—was hobbled by Millars' and therefore was afraid to raise his voice, would be sufficient justification for an inquiry to clear up the matter. Some members may say that the member for Forrest might have no grounds for making such a statement. Members should read the file on the Table. It contains notes made by Mr. Lane-Poole after a series of interviews he had with the Premier. They are not notes which were taken at the time of the interviews. In those notes the Conservator makes very similar statements with regard to the Government. He does not employ the same words, but he says that the Government, as a matter of fact, are controlled by Millars' so far as the forest policy is concerned. The Conservator told the Premier to his face that Millars' dictated the forest

policy of this country, and evidently were going to continue to do so. That is tantamount to saying that Millars' control the Government, including myself as Minister for Forests. Only by holding an inquiry can we clear up this matter. Eventually it will be found that Millars' have no control over any member of the Cabinet any more than they have over any member of this House, and that the whole trouble has arisen because of the fact that Mr. Lane-Poole entertains a desire of getting the early control of the forests of this State. I do not deny the commendable nature of his proposal, but he could only succeed in his desire by working out his policy on lines which give due consideration to the interests of the industry and which would permit of the public being carried along with him. On the question of howers there was a violent change in the policy which had been operating in the State for a number of years. The proper method to have adopted was to ensure that this change in policy would be for the general benefit of the community, as well as of the forests and those employed in them. The sooner we get a competent inquiry to settle the question of whether we were right or wrong in handing over these tremendous powers to one person, whether the methods employed are correct, whether the money we are spending is being spent in the best interests of the present as well as of the future, and whether the regulations which have been promulgated, and are about to be promulgated, are desirable from the point of view not only of the people engaged in the industry but of the taxpayers generally, the sooner shall we overcome the unsatisfactory state of affairs which prevails now. I regret the disagreement which has occurred. At all times I have tried my best—I think the Conservator will admit it—since I have been Minister for Forests, to give Mr. Lane-Poole the opportunity of putting forward what is, I believe, a pretty good technical knowledge of forestry, and applying it to Western Australia. I am not attempting to hinder his operations in any way, but when we arrive at the position that everyone is discontented, it is evident that there is something wrong somewhere. Either the Conservator misunderstands us or we have misunderstood him. The inquiry, however, cannot be held on the basis of an hon. member of this Chamber adopting the attitude taken up by the member for Sussex. It has to be a properly conducted inquiry, free from all animus, and free from any regard either as to the Government or as to the Conservator, so that the public may get the best results from it when it is held.

Mr. SPEAKER: The time for motions has now expired. Is it the wish of the House that motions should be continued?

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [7.48] in moving the second reading said: I take it that most hon. members, by their experience, are aware of the necessity for a measure of this kind to bring the legislation of Western Australia on a par with that of the other States and New Zealand. The principle involved is by no means a new one. In fact, we have admitted the principle of the payment of trustees for the management of estates in more than one of our Acts of Parliament. The Administration Act, which deals with this matter, recognises the principle of payment for services rendered. The chief clause in this Bill is that which amends Section 133 of the Administration Act of 1903, which reads—

The court may, by way of remuneration, allow to an administrator for the time being, on passing his accounts, such commission, not exceeding five pounds per centum on the assets collected by such administrator, including rents and income, as the Court thinks fit. No allowance shall be made to any administrator who omits to pass his account pursuant to any order of the Court.

This grants the maximum allowance for remuneration by way of payment for services rendered to an administrator of five per cent., but it does not necessarily follow that he receives five per cent. It is in the discretion of the court to grant such payments as to the court may seem fit.

The Premier: Do they ever pay an executor?

Hon. T. WALKER: No, that is the point. The Bill proposes to amend this section by making its provisions applicable to an executor in the same way as they apply to an administrator. The principle is a just one, so just that in the other States it has already been admitted, and has become law in every one of them, as well as in New Zealand. Furthermore, it is just, because an executor has as much work to perform, and sometimes more responsible work, as an administrator. The work of an administrator is to realise on the assets and effect distribution to the next of kin, whereas the executor very often has to deal with legacies, and to consider the important question as to the relative rights between parties. The executor, therefore, has greater responsibilities than are held by the administrator. Moreover, it often happens that the administrator is a relative of the deceased, and has a personal interest in the management of the estate, and in producing the best possible results from the realisation of such estate, whereas the executor very frequently is a stranger, and is appointed from outside the relatives, with the result that the burden cast upon him becomes exceedingly onerous and trying. Notwithstanding this, however, the execution of our law as it stands is such as to compel

him to do all this work and make every kind of sacrifice, as well as undertake every species of responsibility, without his being able to obtain any remuneration whatsoever for his services. Not only is the principle recognised in the case of the administrator, but it is recognised in the corporation that we have established by law known as the W.A. Trustee Executor and Agency Co. This piece of legislation provides that—

Five pounds for every £100 of income received by the company as executor, administrator, trustee, receiver, committee trustee in bankruptcy, or guardian, or as such guarantor or surety as aforesaid, or of capital or income received by the company as an attorney acting under power of attorney, and such commission shall be payable out of the moneys or property committed to the management of the company and shall be received and accepted by the company as a full recompense and remuneration to the company for acting as such executor, administrator, trustee, receiver, committee trustee in bankruptcy or guardian or as such guarantor or surety as aforesaid, or attorney, etc.

Mr. Money: And $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in addition on the capital.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes. That is what we allow to a private company for doing exactly this class of work. It is not only in this particular that we have recognised the principle and paid the executor £5 per centum, which is a fixed sum in the case of an administrator even under our Administration Act—five per cent. is the maximum, but the court can give as much less by way of remuneration as it deems fit—but in our settled estates we have the same principle under the Settled Land Act. Section 51 of that Act says—

The court or a judge may, by order, authorise the trustees of a settlement to reclaim for their own use out of the income of the trust property, or in case of a sale by the trustees out of the proceeds of the trust property, a reasonable sum by way of commission for their pains and trouble in the management or sale of the property; but no such commission shall be allowed at a higher rate than £5 per centum on the income or proceeds.

Very often the trustee under the Settled Land Act is the executor, and we grant him the right to take from the proceeds of the sale a sum not exceeding, on the authority of the court, five per cent. I am asking for no innovation, but merely for the application of the principle all round.

The Premier: Five per cent. all round?

Hon. T. WALKER: Not necessarily. Section 133 of the Administration Act, which I am seeking to amend, provides for a maximum of five per cent. to be awarded or granted by the court on the passing of the accounts of the administrator. This Bill says that the court may do the same thing in the

case of an executor. There is only justice in such an arrangement. Having come into contact with various executors, I know that theirs is an exceedingly trying task, in that they are called upon to perform certain duties connected with the affairs of a deceased person, and to hold the scales of justice between the parties concerned.

The Premier: They need not do so.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course, they can renounce the work, but that is looked upon as somewhat cowardly. Very often there is a sentiment involved. When an executor takes on this position of trust, the arrangement is usually made before the death of the testator, and the trustee agrees to act in that capacity. To renounce the work after promising to the living that he will do it, involves a moral tinge that everyone does not like. Once having undertaken to perform these duties faithfully, even though they demand a great deal of self-sacrifice, and not only a great deal of time but sometimes a great deal of expense, a trustee feels he cannot renounce the work. Of course he is entitled to get from the estate the actual cost of administration and of obtaining probate, but this does not cover all that he loses and all that can be put on paper. It is an unfair duty to place upon any person, seeing that an administrator, or a trustee company, or a trustee under the Settled Land Act, can receive payment for work of a similar nature. There is only one other amendment I propose to make, and that is contained in the last clause. As hon. members are aware, in filing papers for probate and swearing the oath of the executor, one must appear before a commissioner of the Supreme Court for taking oaths. It often happens that a very small estate is left in the country far away from where a commissioner for affidavits is to be found, and far away from magistrates. Such circumstances make it extremely expensive for the executor to obtain the attendance and the signature of a commissioner for affidavits. Clause 3 provides that in such cases a justice of the peace may do the work. Of course, a commissioner for affidavits gets a small fee for attesting these documents; but that does not matter. I think we ought to facilitate as far as we possibly can the work of those who have to seek the aid of the court. Therefore, with deference, I submit this amendment to the Act. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [8.4]: This appears to be a very harmless little measure. I agree with the mover that it is right that the man who has the trouble of administering an estate should be entitled to receive five per cent. on the value, or whatever else the court may consider a fair remuneration. I suppose trouble does arise from instances of probate being renounced. As the hon. member has pointed out, a man hardly likes to refuse to do for the dead what he has promised to the living.

Personally I see no reason whatever why we should not agree to the first amendment proposed by the Bill. As regards the substitution of a justice of the peace for a commissioner for affidavits, I daresay we shall be running very little risk. I hope the legal gentleman who sits on this side of the House will let us have his views on that question. Personally, I do not see that any risk whatever is involved. A justice of the peace is to be referred to only when there is no commissioner for affidavits within 10 miles. I have no desire to oppose the Bill. If it is as described by the mover, it may be regarded by the House as entirely fair in its provisions.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [8.6]: The amendments proposed by this Bill are, in my opinion, logical and right. The distinction originally drawn between an administrator and an executor arose in this way: the executor was the nominee of the testator, while the administrator was the nominee of the court. It was thought that as the testator named his executor in the will, he would mention the fact in the will if he desired to pay his executor. But times have altered since those niceties were instituted, and I certainly think the first amendment proposed by the Bill will improve matters immensely. I have within my own knowledge instances of executors renouncing probate on account of the loss which would be entailed on them by carrying out the terms of the will, which instrument contained no provision for remuneration of the executor. In those cases an administrator would step in, and possibly an administrator contrary to the actual wishes of the testator. The amendment will secure that the original nominee of the testator, namely the executor mentioned in the will itself, will manage the estate. With regard to the swearing of the affidavit before a justice of the peace instead of a commissioner for affidavits, this is not an innovation, since the Bills of Sale Act provides for a justice of the peace taking the affidavit for the purpose of a bill of sale. The object of having an affidavit sworn before a commissioner is to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings. A certain responsibility attaches to an affidavit, and, naturally, when it is sworn before a qualified commissioner of the Supreme Court, there is more attention paid to its preparation, and its execution is more likely to be accurate and right. However, I regard this second amendment also as reasonable and necessary. There are many other legal matters in respect of which greater facilities will have to be afforded to the people resident in the country, but I will not deal with those matters now. The Bill is fair to all parties concerned.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Mr. BOYLAND (Kalgoorlie) [8.12] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend Section 212 of the Criminal Code. I have many reasons for introducing the measure. In my district there are various charities which for their specific purposes require money from time to time. One of these charities is the Fresh Air League, which sends goldfields children to the coast for an annual trip. That charity in itself requires a large amount of money every year, and the only means we have of securing funds for it is through the medium of a sweep, or some similar method. Then there is our children's hospital, for which we need about £500 annually. The sweep is at present the only method we have of raising money to relieve our sick children. Again, we have a benevolent society, and also a fund for helping sufferers from miner's complaint. Lastly, the goldfields community are raising funds to establish a club at the Wooroloo Sanatorium. I think hon. members will agree that all these are very worthy and laudable objects, and that we are entitled to raise money for them by means of a sweep if we cannot do it by any other means. The total of the requirements which I have enumerated is about £3,000 per annum. I daresay hon. members representing other parts of the State are faced with much the same set of facts. I may refer to the Ugly Men's Association in Perth, which is doing wonderful work. I can safely say that it is one of the best organised institutions that Australia has known. The Ugly Men require to be furnished with means of raising revenue to enable them to carry out their object of helping people in necessitous circumstances. There are many sweeps operating throughout Australia: Adams's sweeps, the New South Wales sweeps, and the Queensland sweeps. I do not know whether these sweeps are advertised largely on the coast, but that is the case on the goldfields. I am told that over £300,000 is annually sent from Western Australia to Adams's sweeps alone. I contend that we should retain at all events some of that money in this State, thus incidentally helping our own necessitous cases. I consider I have good grounds for proposing this amendment to the Criminal Code, and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

MOTION—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS.

To inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from 7th September on the following motion by Mr. Pickering:—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the Wyndham Meat Works and to report upon—(a) Cost of all works in connection therewith; (b) Cost of maintenance; (c) Staff; its emoluments and allowances; (d) Management; (e) Business transactions; (f) And to make any recommendations it may see fit in the interests of the State.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [8.16]: I do not know why the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) asked for a select committee to inquire into the cost of the operations in connection with the Wyndham Meat Works. He wishes to know the cost of all works in connection with that undertaking, the cost of maintenance, particulars as to the staff, their emoluments and allowances, and as to the management and business transactions. All that information can be supplied if he moves for a return in the ordinary way. There would be no justification for the appointment of a select committee to find out these particulars. They are mere records of the department, and a copy of those records can be produced if the House so desires. I am certain that the House would not ask members to waste their time in sitting as a select committee to find out this information.

Mr. Underwood: Why not?

The PREMIER: The hon. member can have the information on all these points.

Mr. Underwood: Can you run the works?

The PREMIER: There is another clause in the motion brought forward by the member for Sussex, to the effect that the select committee is to make any recommendations it may see fit in the interests of the State. If that hon. member wished, as apparently he does, to have an inquiry into the question of the future running of the meat works either by Government management, by lease or by any other means, there would be something in it. I do not think the hon. member justified the appointment of a select committee on that point at any rate. I should be very glad if the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) or any other member of this Chamber would show the Government how we can run these works and make them pay. It is a difficult problem for anyone to run the Wyndham Meat Works to advantage. Practically all the meat works in Australia are closed down at the present time because of the price of meat. Even the meat works at Fremantle which were recently erected, cannot be operated because of the prohibitive cost of getting sheep and cattle to the works, the cost of shipment and of the difficulties in other directions. I

do not know what it is the member for Sussex wishes to secure. All he desires under the first five sections of his motion can be answered without a select committee. If he chooses to do so, he can alter the motion and he will get an answer without the necessity for a select committee. There is nothing to hide. If the hon. member suspects that the records of the department are incorrect, it is a different matter. He did not say that he did so, and there is no reason for believing that the records are not correct. If the House passes the Bill of which I gave notice to-day, which aims at the appointment of a Parliamentary standing committee, this is one of the things that such a committee might look into. I should think it would be quite impossible for a select committee sitting only while the House is in session to go into this matter and present a report which would be of any value. It would probably be quite possible for the standing committee I have asked for, and which will have all the powers of a Royal Commission, to go into this matter. I do not know whether much would come of it, but if they wished to go to Wyndham to continue their inquiries there, it would be a costly matter. I suggest to the member for Sussex that he alters his motion and simply asks for a return covering the information he desires. I will agree to furnish that information.

Mr. Underwood: Will you supply the information?

The PREMIER: Yes, I will.

Mr. Underwood: It has been denied me.

The PREMIER: By whom?

Mr. Underwood: By Mr. McGhie.

The PREMIER: He had no right to deny the information to the hon. member. The House has the right to ask for this information and to get it.

Hon. P. Collier: The House has the right to get the information but not from the manager of the meat works.

The PREMIER: If the House asked for the information, members should get it. I undertake to get the information if it is asked for in the way I suggest. Regarding the last section of the motion, I suggest it be withdrawn, and if the Bill to appoint a Parliamentary standing committee is agreed to, that is a question that can and will be inquired into. I am not going to answer the statements made by the hon. member when moving his motion; there seems to be no reason for doing so. I have no objection to giving the House the fullest information.

Mr. Underwood: What are you going to do next year?

The PREMIER: The hon. member will have to wait and see. No one can tell what is to be done in Queensland next year. No one knows what the meat market will be like.

Mr. Angelo: Very few have any idea what the position will be.

The PREMIER: That is so. If the member for Sussex adopts my suggestion he will get all the information he desires.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.23]: I believe that an inquiry not only into the running and construction of the Wyndham Meat Works, but also into the position generally may do some good. I cannot get out of my mind the fact that the Premier and the Minister for Works practically came into office on the question of the appointment of a select committee to investigate the position regarding the Wyndham Meat Works. The Premier did not speak then as he does now regarding these works. He wanted a select committee then. Of course, he wanted to get into office and he used the Wyndham Meat Works as a means to get there. There is not much doubt about that. Having attained office—I am sorry the Minister for Works is not present to-night—it would be a fair thing, after about five years, to have another inquiry in order to see how present and past Governments have got on regarding the Wyndham Meat Works. The Premier says that he is prepared to give the House the fullest information. I asked the Minister for the North-West if I could get information regarding the Wyndham Meat Works. He replied in the affirmative. He sent for the manager, Mr. McGhie, and said, "Give Mr. Underwood what information he wants." I went to Mr. McGhie and he flatly refused to give me the information that I desired regarding the meat works. There are many things we want to know about them. I have to confess that the mover of this motion does not know too much about his subject. Putting it shortly, these works have cost the State something like £600,000.

Mr. Pickering: I think you are under-estimating it.

The Premier: They have cost something like £723,000.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Probably the Government are reckoning in that figure about £90,000 the State lost in running these works. I think this is a fact. I say "I think" where, as a member of Parliament, I should "know." I say I think that the State lost something approaching £90,000 as a result of the last kill at the Wyndham Meat Works. That money was not lost on interest and sinking fund on the capital cost of the works, but on the actual running of the works.

The Premier: You would get that information in the return.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I want to go a little bit further than the actual figure it cost us; I want to find out why it cost us that much.

Mr. Pickering: Hear, hear!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We have spent well over £600,000. We have one of the best meat works in Australia. The Wyndham Meat Works, in design and construction, have few, if any, superiors in Australia. We have ample cattle in the district. We have a beautiful harbour with a depth of water from 26 feet at low springs to 56 feet at high springs, with the ship lying about 200 or 300 yards away from the works. We have possibly the best water supply along the Western Australian coast with the exception

perhaps of that at Albany. For a holding ground for the cattle, we have some hundreds of thousands of acres reserved of the best pastoral country in Western Australia. Given all these things in, the last kill we had at the works cost the State about £90,000.

The Premier: There was an impossible market.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We had a normal market. This is one point I want cleared up and the committee should inquire into it. We sell Wyndham tinned meat at 21s. a dozen, whereas the normal market for tinned meat is about 10s. per dozen. We sold hides at away up above the normal price. The only normal market we struck in respect to the meat that was left there.

The Premier: There was none; it was all sold.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: What did you get for the tinned meat?

The Premier: I do not know; I will get the information for you.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I want to know why, seeing that the price we obtained for tinned meat—

The Premier: How much was tinned?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I want to know that.

The Premier: We can find that out for you, also.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: About five years ago you required that badly. Let me get back to the question of the price of meat. The Premier says we struck a bad market. As a matter of fact we sold that meat at above pre-war rates.

The Premier: It was produced at above pre-war costs.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: All that was sold locally. That which got away brought war prices. The Wyndham tinned meat brought 150 per cent. more than tinned meat sold in pre-war times. We want a full inquiry in regard to meat works generally. We may then get some information in respect of the Fremantle meat works.

The Premier: You can have it all.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We shall be very pleased to get it all. I notice that in regard to Fremantle—

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss Fremantle under this motion.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: No, but I wish to illustrate the need for an inquiry. We have at least £600,000 invested at Wyndham.

The Premier: You say it is well invested.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I say you cannot run those works. You will not tell us whether or not you intend to run them.

The Premier: We cannot. It all depends on the price of meat.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We have £600,000 invested at Wyndham.

Hon. P. Collier: More than that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Well, £723,000. And the Premier says we cannot run those works.

The Premier: We cannot sell the meat.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Possibly if a committee were appointed we might find some

way out of that difficulty. In regard to the price of meat, we have heard it announced by Mr. Monger that they cannot go on with the Fremantle works, because they cannot get more than 4d. per lb. for mutton. I saw exhibited in the corridor of the House a graph showing that 4d. per lb. for mutton is over the normal price, which before the war was 3½d. per lb. for Australian mutton.

The Premier: It costs 4d. to handle it here and get it Home.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If the Government will tell us that they are going to close the Wyndham Meat Works—

The Premier: They are closed. You know that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I know that the works are not doing anything. I know also that the ordinary wages men have been put off while the whole of the staff are retained. If one goes down the Terrace he will find the office of the Wyndham Meat Works, and all the clerks and typists there employed.

The Premier: You will not find many.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are in Barrack Street now, are they not?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I think they are. I know it is only the wages men who have been put off, while the whole of the staff is still retained.

The Premier: No.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And Ministers cannot tell us whether or not they are going to operate the works next year.

Hon. P. Collier: Neither could any select committee.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: But the select committee could find out whether it is possible to run the works, or whether we had better sell or lease them. If any private enterprise is prepared to take over those works, we ought to let them go.

The Premier: They should make an offer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: For how long have you held that opinion?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Ever since the time when the Nevanas contract was being considered in Cabinet. I have always been in favour of letting those works on contract.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, any offer will be considered.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I know that. People in the Wyndham district have had a very bad run. Ships have been taken from the port, stock has been held for treatment in the works, and the works are not running. The settlers there are left with their stock running in the bush, and unless it is decided either to use the works next year or close them down and restore the shipping, quite a number of cattle growers up there will be totally ruined, many of them after years of the hardest toil men ever put in. The Premier says we do not want an inquiry, that the Government will give us a return. What is to become of those people who have been working there, some of them for a score of years? Have the Government considered what they are going to do with those people and their cattle?

Mr. Pickering: They are just an incident.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is so, but if they were in the South-West—

The Premier: We cannot buy their cattle, can we, unless we can sell also?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: This question calls for the most searching inquiry, more particularly for the reason that none of the Ministers knows anything whatever about it.

The Premier: Do you?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I have been there, which is considerably more than any of the Ministers can say. They know nothing about Wyndham, and apparently they care less.

The Premier: That is nonsense.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is not nonsense.

Hon. P. Collier: Haven't you a Minister for the North-West?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: Was he not there?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, for a day and a half. He was taking photographs, and if you could but hear him lecture on the subject you would agree that he does it beautifully.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the man we want, a publicity man.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is the man you have got. He is the man for a publicity campaign. We must do something in regard to this. All the Premier can be induced to say is "If you ask for a return, I will furnish it." We want more than that. We want to know what the Government are going to do about Wyndham. We want to know how the settlers there are going to get on, those people who have been up there 20 and 30 years, and who will be left totally stranded, with their cattle running in the bush.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How did they manage before the works were built?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: They were shipping.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Let them ship now.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: They cannot. Where are they going to ship to?

The Premier: Where did they ship to before?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: To Fremantle; but when it was decided to start the works at Wyndham the shipping was cut out from Wyndham and the meat supply for the metropolitan area was brought from Derby. As a result the people of Wyndham have been left stranded. Either the Government have to run those works or provide shipping and sale for about 30,000 or 40,000 head of bullocks. Alternatively those most deserving settlers will have to carry their swags out of the country. That is the position, despite which the Premier says an inquiry is not necessary.

The Premier: You want to know if we can sell the meat.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I want to know what you are going to do in regard to the meat works and the settlers.

The Premier: The settlers are not part of the meat works.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If they are not part of the works, at all events they are close relations, first cousins. I am sorry the Premier has decided that we shall not have an inquiry. I suppose we must let the matter slide.

The Premier: I merely suggest that you ask for something which can be furnished without an inquiry.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We have spent £723,000 and we have spoilt the port of Wyndham for shipping, and left the settlers stranded.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How has the port been spoilt?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There are no ships going there.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Whose fault is that?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is what I want to know. They were shipping bullocks from Wyndham until the works were prepared to treat bullocks. Since then they have not shipped any further, and so far as I know there is no provision to be made next year for sending ships to Wyndham to bring down bullocks to the metropolitan area. The Premier did not tell us that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not in the motion.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: With the Wyndham Meat Works is bound up the whole success of the district over a radius of 250 miles.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order only in discussing the Wyndham Meat Works; not the ramifications of the shipping on the North-West coast.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Exactly; I am discussing the Wyndham Meat Works and the effect of the works. The effect of these works on Wyndham is that the settlers have been deprived of their shipping. The Government should be prepared to tell us what they are going to do. A sum of £700,000 has been spent there. We have there many of the best pioneering settlers that Australia ever had or will ever get, and so far as we know to-day, not a single thing is being done either to run the works or to serve these settlers by other means. I am sorry that the Premier refuses to have an inquiry into these works.

The Premier: I suggest that you ask for the information you want.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.46]: The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) commenced by complaining that he has been unable to obtain any information with regard to the Wyndham Meat Works, and his subsequent remarks revealed the fact that he has been able to glean a considerable amount of information from some source or other.

Mr. Underwood: I got it from the Premier just now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I venture to say that the hon. member gave several items of information which he did not obtain from the

Premier. It is rather an extraordinary thing to find the hon. member stating that though the Minister for the North-West, who is in control of these works, ordered the manager of the works—a subordinate officer—to give the hon. member all the information he desired, yet that official point blank disobeyed the instructions of his Minister.

Mr. Underwood: Not point blank.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member said he absolutely refused.

Mr. Underwood: All right, he absolutely refused.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He absolutely refused to give any information, notwithstanding the clear and specific instructions from his Minister to give all the information the hon. member desired.

Mr. Underwood: That is so; I stand to that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a remedy for that.

Mr. Underwood: What is the remedy?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should say that the hon. member could obtain a remedy, or satisfaction from the Minister. I cannot believe that any Minister, with any regard for the responsibilities of his office, would allow an officer of his department to flout his definite instructions in that way. I cannot believe that any Minister would be so lacking in a sense of responsibility as to permit that sort of thing.

The Premier: The Minister probably does not know that he refused it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot imagine that the Minister does know. I am quite certain there is not a Minister who, having given an instruction of that kind, would allow an officer to set it aside. I feel sure that the Minister does not know of it, and if the hon. member makes the Minister acquainted with the attitude of this officer, as I consider it his duty to do, the Minister will know how to deal with this officer in future, and the hon. member will be able to obtain all the information he desires.

Mr. Underwood: It ought to be pretty well known now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps the Minister will become aware of it through reading the report of this debate. Once again I have to deprecate the tendency in some quarters to ask for the appointment of a select committee on every conceivable occasion. If we take the terms of this motion, we find that three of the points on which the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) wants a select committee to inquire are the cost of all works in connection with the Wyndham Meat Works, the cost of maintenance, the staff, its emoluments and allowances. Why on earth should it be necessary to ask for a select committee in order to ascertain the cost of these works? The hon. member can easily obtain that information. If he likes to look up "Hansard" No. 5 for the present session, he will find that the information was given by the Minister in answer to a question in another

place. If he is not inclined to take information given in that way, surely there is no Minister in this House who, in answer to a question, would not supply the hon. member with the information at any time. To appoint a select committee with all the necessary paraphernalia and expense to find out a simple question such as the total cost of these works is positively absurd. Then, as to the cost of maintenance, this is information which the hon. member could obtain from any Minister in this House. I do not suppose I am placed in any favoured position and I can say that I have never experienced any difficulty in obtaining from any Minister legitimate information regarding these or any other works. The cost of maintenance could easily be ascertained by addressing a question to the Minister. It would not even be necessary to move for a return.

The Premier: It is a matter of record.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; or no doubt the hon. member could obtain it by applying to the department. Then the hon. member wants a select committee to inquire into the staff, its emoluments and allowances. Surely he could ascertain those particulars without going to the trouble and expense of having a select committee. It appears like employing a steam hammer to crush a fly. Fancy bringing into service a select committee to find out the staff engaged in these works and the salaries paid. If the hon. member has not any more important questions to submit to this select committee than are contained in the three paragraphs to which I have referred, he is only wasting the time of the House and the money of the country in asking for the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. Pickering: Read the remaining paragraphs of my motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I intend to do so, but at such pace as commends itself to my judgment. The hon. member knows that when the Annual Estimates are under discussion, the Minister in charge of each department comes armed with the fullest possible information. In fact it has been the subject of complaint in this House, on the part of private members, that Ministers have unduly occupied the time of the House on the Estimates by narrating the whole of the details appertaining to the control of their departments. The hon. member, therefore, can obtain the whole of the information he desires either by way of questions, returns, or when the Estimates are under discussion. If it were not so, I should say that what is required is not a select committee but a change of Ministers to administer the affairs of this State. Where does responsible government come in? Where is there any responsibility in government if every time a member requires information concerning the working of a department, he cannot obtain it from a Minister but must secure the appointment of a select committee to call witnesses and glean the information for him? If we have reached that stage in the administration of the affairs of this State, it is not a select committee we want but a

change of Ministers. We must see that Ministers are saddled with their proper responsibilities, and that they do not evade their responsibilities by passing them on to select committees appointed by this House. The Minister controlling this department is charged with the responsibility of running the works in the best interests of the State and of those who have occasion to deal with the works. It is for the Minister to propound a policy and to decide what he is going to do in answer to the many questions raised by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood). As to what will be done by the works next year, no select committee would be able to determine. If the Minister, with the advice of his responsible officers, is unable to say at this juncture whether the works will operate next year, or what will happen, no select committee drawn from members of this House, having no experience of the business, would be able to assist to answer the question. It is for the Minister to decide these matters with the sources of information and advice at his disposal. I want to remind the hon. member that even though the works are not running this year, and though the pastoralists are left with stock on their hands, this is not the only instance of its kind in Australia. Practically all over Australia where meat works are operating, a similar state of affairs prevails. The Fremantle works erected by and under the supervision of capable and expert business men, free entirely from the influence of red tape or departmental control, were informed on the authority of Mr. Monger, who I concede is a very shrewd and capable business man, will probably not be able to operate this year because the bottom is out of the market and the future is altogether uncertain. What assistance would a select committee be on such a question as this? Could they prophesy what the condition of the meat market will be 12 months hence? Could they advise the Minister that he could go safely ahead because they could foresee a profitable market for meat in 12 months' time? It is of no use appointing select committees unless they can be of some value to the House. I agree entirely with the objections raised by the Premier to this motion. It is not warranted. A select committee cannot be of any use; it cannot achieve any purpose of value to the House, to the works, or to those affected by the operations of the works. I commend the hon. member for his all-embracing interest in the various industries of the State. I am satisfied that he is actuated by the best of motives in wishing to see these works—even though they may be situated in the far north—placed on a sound footing just as he would be if the works were situated in the South-West or in his own constituency. But the hon. member will not achieve any purpose of value by urging his motion. All the information he desires is already available. As to the future, it is for the management of the works to make recommendations to the Minister, and a select committee would not be in

a position to know as much as the manager of the works and the Minister charged with the responsibility of controlling the works.

Mr. ANGELO (Gaseoyne) [8.53]: The member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) made a complaint that he could not obtain from the manager of the Wyndham Meat Works any information regarding the running of the works. I would like to put one view before the House and that is the position of the manager. The manager is in a most delicate position. I feel perfectly sure that he is doing his utmost to ensure that these works will be operating during the coming season. When a man is placed in charge of a business such as this, it is absolutely necessary at times to observe the closest secrecy regarding any negotiations which he is conducting. There are delicate contracts to be entered into; there is the English market to be carefully considered; there are negotiations for labour and material, and if all this information is given to the House or to the public, it will probably jeopardise the successful operation of the works later on. I only suggest this because it represents information which was given to me by meat people in Melbourne only a month ago. They said, "We are sorry we cannot give you too much information, because you are touching upon delicate points, and if we are to get our meat works opened during the coming season we have to be careful as to what information gets out." I have never mentioned the matter to the manager of the Wyndham Meat Works, and I am merely basing my ideas on what was said to me in Melbourne. Is it fair to ask Mr. McWhie, who is doing his utmost to get the Wyndham Meat Works re-opened, and to conduct successful negotiations to that end, to divulge information at the present time? It is not the right thing to do. It is said that it is a dreadful thing for the State that the Wyndham Meat Works are not open. When I was in Melbourne I consulted with some of the largest meat people there, and told them of our difficulties in Carnarvon. They said to me, "You can tell your directors that they are very lucky, and that we know of many other meat works which are not only ready to open, but have negotiated for their stock and engaged their labour. Your loss in not being able to operate just now is your first loss and your last loss, whereas others are losing in directions in which you have not lost anything." With the present abnormal conditions of the meat market we have to put up with the fact that the Wyndham Meat Works are closed down for this year. We should do nothing to hamper the Minister in charge of the management of the works in making a successful start, if possible, next year.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.2]: More criticism has been

levelled at the Wyndham Meat Works than at any other works that have been started in the State. This criticism has been going on ever since the works were commenced. I am rather surprised that the member for Sussex should have moved a motion of this description. I thought he had better judgment and knew more about the position than to have done so.

Mr. Pickering: You can say what you like.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Kimberley made some reference the other evening to these works, and to the position of the cattle growers in not being able to dispose of their cattle. I would point out that a private company would not have paid anything for their cattle until they had acquired them. The Government, however, have gone to the assistance of the cattle owners in making them an advance upon their beasts. The Wyndham Meat Works are not the only works which have cost more money than was anticipated. During the past five or six years there is scarcely a completed work which has not cost more than was thought at the outset. It may be said that in many cases they have cost double the original estimate.

The Premier: Quite that!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: When the matter was under discussion before, I interjected that when Vestey Bros. commenced their works they calculated upon an expenditure of £100,000, and when later on they wrote to the Government of Western Australia they stated that the works were costing £300,000, and were not half completed. There we have an Anglo-American firm, well versed in the construction of such works and the conduct of such a business, exceeding by three times the estimated cost of the undertaking. These works also are closed down.

The Premier: Their works cost far more than ours did.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Sussex says, "Shall we write down the works by such an amount that they can be operated on the co-operative basis as a payable concern?" I have not heard anyone suggest that the works are not worth the money that has been spent upon them.

Mr. Pickering: Have you not heard that they are over-capitalised?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have heard it suggested that the works are rather too big, but why write them down when they are standing at their true value? The hon. member must be aware that there is already in existence a co-operative company in Fremantle and one in Carnarvon, and that in neither case can the works be carried on in a satisfactory manner. The reason for this is that there is something wrong with the other side of the world, not within Western Australia. When I was sailing up the Thames in February, 1920, I counted 13 steamers in the river laden with Australian meat. There was not one cool storage place in the port of London where this meat could be stored; every place was full. Mr. Long, the represen-

tative of the "Times," who accompanied the Prince of Wales, told me that he had counted 20 ships the week before. The market was flooded then as it is now. It is impossible to operate the works unless they are operated at a loss. The hon. member says that the works were supposed to have been constructed at a cost of £155,000. The officers of the Government said at the time they could not be constructed for anything like that amount.

Mr. Pickering: That was the amount of the tender.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not want to go into that matter now. Since then the cost of everything has gone up considerably. I would have no objection to the information that is sought for being given if it would do any good, but I do not think such would be the case. It is a great mistake to change one's manager, especially when he happens to be a good man. The manager who was first appointed came here with the highest credentials. He had been in charge of works in Queensland and had constructed works for American companies. I believe he was fully qualified to conduct the Wyndham Meat Works. A change, however, was made. When such a change is made and the works are not completed, there is generally some complaint about everything that is done in order to show that the other man was wrong, and that this was a reason for some increased expenditure. Further, it is not advisable, in connection with works such as these, to have two public works departments. One should be quite sufficient. Mr. Tindale, the engineer for the North, knows all about that part of the State, and there is no necessity for the Agricultural Department to start another public works branch, in order to carry out some works which have ordinarily been under the supervision of Mr. Tindale. I agree with the Premier that a good deal of the matter asked for could be given by way of answers to questions. There is no necessity for a select committee to tell us that the bottom has fallen out of the meat market. We know that the market is flooded and that the price of Australian meat in London to-day is about 4½d. per lb. It is impossible for the Government to get high prices for their meat here, or to operate the works successfully under present conditions. Immediately the market improves I believe the Government will make an endeavour to reopen the works in order to relieve the position of the stockholders in the Kimberleys. It will be their duty to do this and I believe it is their intention to do so. I will, therefore, vote against the motion.

Mr. DURACK (Kimberley) [9.11]: I endorse the remarks which have been made about the seriousness of the position in the North, but I do not say that the Government are to be blamed for it. The Leader of the Opposition has said that this condition applies the world over. We cannot

market our stock anywhere. Some reflection has been made upon the management for neglect to supply certain information. When I have asked the Minister for the North-West for information, I have always been given it, and have received an assurance from him that the management will at all times be ready to supply me with whatever particulars I require. I appreciate the attitude of the member for Sussex in his desire to obtain information respecting the Wyndham Meat Works, but fail to see that a select committee can throw any light upon the subject. What we are principally concerned about is the management of the works to the best advantage of the State, and if possible to effect a reduction in the cost. A select committee, however, cannot throw much light on that point. A much better method would be for the pastoralists to discuss the matter with the management. By this means much more good could be effected than by a select committee. The member for Pilbara, in the remarks he made, forgets that in normal times we could freeze and ship for about 1d. or 1½d. per lb., whereas it now costs a sum greatly exceeding that to send the product home. I do not agree with the member for Gaseoyne as to the necessity for observing so much secrecy in these matters. There may be certain details which have to be kept secret, but I do not think there is any need for any particular secrecy. Most of the details of the meat trade are known to the cattle raisers. I believe the Government are anxious to do what they can to assist the settlers in the North when the time arrives for them to do so. The settlers there owe certain thanks to the Government, who have come to their assistance in advancing money upon the cattle they now hold. They are, therefore, just as much concerned as are the settlers in hoping that the works will shortly be reopened.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [9.15]: I have listened to much and have read much regarding the Wyndham Meat Works, and, as a result, it seems to me that the set policy of the pastoralists of this State, side by side with denouncing the works at every possible turn, is to make every endeavour to get hold of them. The member for Kimberley (Mr. Durack) may smile.

Mr. Pickering: We are getting some light on the subject now.

Mr. LAMBERT: There was certainly not a great deal of light thrown on the subject by the mover of the motion. One effect of the debate has been to cause the spokesman of the northern pastoralists, the member for Kimberley, to disclose his hand.

Hon. P. Collier: The unseen hand.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes. It appears to me that the Wyndham Meat Works should be dealt with in common with our other State trading concerns. It should be the set policy of the Government either to run those con-

cerns or not run them. The policy of hypocrisy and sham should not be carried any further. The matter has gone beyond a joke, or I may say that it is now a joke which the country is paying heavily for. Unless we can get an outraged public to express their indignation and to show the Government that they will not have this toying with millions of public money, the present policy will continue. It is now due from the Government to make a definite pronouncement of their policy regarding State trading concerns. The State has enormous sums of money invested in them, and the Premier as a business man should know that the least possible advantage the people can derive, directly or indirectly, from those concerns is this indefinite policy of drift on the part of Ministers who are without the necessary courage to tell the electors whether the State should or should not continue to run the concerns. If it is the policy of the Government, as expressed by the Premier two or three years ago, to sell the State trading concerns—

The Premier: Will you buy them?

Mr. LAMBERT: That depends upon the terms on which the Premier will sell them. I know very well that there are in this State at the present moment people prepared, if not to buy, at all events to lease them on terms which would prove infinitely better for the taxpayers of this State than the manner in which the concerns are being conducted at the present time.

The Premier: You are not auctioning them now, are you?

Mr. LAMBERT: No. I am not going to put them up to auction; I want the Premier to do that. The trouble is that the hon. gentleman has put his own policy and the policy of his party up to auction, and that the people of Western Australia have bid at auction for the policy of the Government.

The Premier: They got a good bargain.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes; they got a good bargain in the shape of the financial drift so evident throughout the State to-day, and especially permeating the Government departments, and, in the most singular manner, the State trading concerns.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The State trading concerns are all right.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am not saying whether they are all right, or whether they are all wrong. I am merely pointing out that the taxpayers of Western Australia have had to pay for them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have not had to pay for those concerns. Those concerns have not cost the taxpayers anything.

Mr. LAMBERT: The taxpayers are committed to the extent of the capital outlay involved, and are to-day finding interest and sinking fund, in respect of that outlay, from the Consolidated Revenue of this State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, they are not.

Mr. LAMBERT: To a considerable extent they are.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Nothing of the kind. The State trading concerns have contributed nearly £300,000 to the Consolidated Revenue of this State.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am not going to discuss that matter in detail with the hon. member.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I will give it to you in black and white.

Mr. LAMBERT: That particular matter is of little concern to me for the moment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are discussing the Wyndham Meat Works.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not wish the hon. member to take up time in reading things which occasionally he does not understand.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I understand them; you do not read them.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not want the hon. member to get warm about the matter, or to trouble himself about what I read or understand. The Government are in charge of the affairs of this State for the time being—only for the time being—and while they are there they should make some clear and definite pronouncement as to whether it is their policy that the State trading concerns should continue or cease.

Mr. O'Loughlin: There is no intention of disposing of them.

Mr. LAMBERT: Some little time ago the Government sought statutory authority to dispose of any State trading concern by resolution of both Houses. They can act upon those lines at any time. When the Government went to the country it was their express policy to sell or lease the State trading concerns at the earliest possible moment. However, nothing has been done. The managers and foremen of those concerns, right down to the chap who sweeps out the office, do not know whether it is the policy of the Government that the concerns should continue for another week or another year. The member for Kimberley (Mr. Durack) is quite right in the position he takes. That hon. member, together with many other men in the North, is concerned in the Wyndham Meat Works. However, he is not more concerned in them than are the general public. I consider that he, as a Government supporter, should declare that the time has passed for the Government to dilly-dally with the question. It is no use having select committees or Royal Commissions to inquire into past history, as, for instance, whether the works have cost too much or not. The works are there, and the people of this State are committed to the capital expenditure. The works should be continued, either by the State of Western Australia or by private enterprise.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government are committed to continue them until Parliament decides upon some other course of action.

Mr. LAMBERT: True. But, as a fact, owing to the haphazard, hesitating policy of the Government in this regard, the pastoralists of Western Australia now do not know for one day or for one week ahead whether the Wyndham Meat Works are going to be

controlled by the Government or not. The same thing can be said of the State Implement Works. Some little time ago it was stated that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. decided the control of that undertaking.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Westralian Farmers would control the country if given the chance.

Mr. LAMBERT: Further, it has been suggested that the brickmakers of this State would like to have the Government brick-works.

The Premier: What about the Wyndham Meat Works?

Mr. LAMBERT: If the hon. gentleman could make up his mind as to what he is going to do with those works, there would be no occasion now for me to speak. I recognise that under present conditions there are insuperable difficulties in the way of making any definite pronouncement as to when operations can be resumed at Wyndham. But what I am concerned about just now is whether the Government are going to run those works, or whether private enterprise is going to do so. Undoubtedly the Government could lease the works to-morrow. If they can make up their minds as to what is their policy in this connection, they can lease the works immediately. There is a man in the State who is prepared to lease the works.

Mr. Money: Will you support their being leased?

Mr. LAMBERT: No, flatly, I will not; but I want to know whether the Government will support it, in accordance with their policy as far as we understand it and as far as the people of the country have had an opportunity of understanding it.

The Premier: This is the first I have heard about leasing. What about this friend of yours?

Mr. LAMBERT: The man is not a friend of mine, but I know that he is here and that he is prepared to lease the works.

The Minister for Agriculture: At his own price, of course.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am not going to discuss that matter. I do not know anything about the price. Let the Minister find that out. With all due regard for the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) and his desire to obtain information, I do not think a select committee would do much good. I am quite prepared to believe every word that the Premier has said as to the member for Sussex or any other member being in a position to obtain any information that could be obtained by a select committee. What I wish to point out is that Government supporters, if they are true to the mandate which they received from the country, should obtain from the Premier a definite pronouncement as to whether these trading concerns are to be continued as State concerns or as private concerns. The people of the country are entitled to know that.

Mr. Mann: Is this an opportune time to say?

Mr. LAMBERT: Absolutely opportune.

Mr. Mann: With such a market as exists now?

Mr. LAMBERT: The market, as the hon. member knows, will not alter in the slightest degree either this year or next year.

Mr. Mann: The state of the market must affect the value of the works.

Mr. LAMBERT: Not to any extent. People know very well that the market will become normal again. Let hon. members consider the large meat works of the Eastern States and New Zealand. As soon as the market becomes normal again, those works will resume their activities on the same basis as in pre-war days. Of course, until conditions do return to normal, the works will not be required to a large extent. But one does not see the owners of freezing works in the Eastern States and New Zealand putting them up to auction. Mr. Angas, the proprietor of those huge meat works in Melbourne, has not put them up to auction.

Mr. Mann: He has closed them down, anyway.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the hon. member will close down for a minute or two, he will learn something. I will at all events try to teach him his obligations to the electors.

Mr. Mann: If you are a good teacher, I will prove a good pupil.

Mr. LAMBERT: The farmers and pastoralists of this State, who are directly and indirectly interested in the Wyndham Meat Works to a very large extent, are entitled to know the settled policy of the Government. However, I consider that no good purpose will be served by carrying the motion. Let us hope that some definite decision will be arrived at by the Government, and that the everlasting bickering between Ministers will now cease. We had a spectacle of it only the other night, when the Minister for Works, in a most vigorous, not to say infuriated, speech, defended his attitude towards the State Implement Works. Almost in the same breath, however, the Minister declared that he would sell those works at the earliest possible moment. Fancy requiring the manager of those works to get the best out of his lieutenants and his men, all of them knowing full well that the Government policy is to dispose of the works! If the Government policy is to sell the State trading concerns, the House should know. That is the only businesslike way of doing business. Finally, let me again express the hope that Government supporters will demand of Ministers that the policy of drift in connection with the State trading concerns shall cease, and cease at once, and that the people shall know whether they are to be committed to actively operating the State trading concerns.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex—in reply) [9.30]: If I might say so without disrespect to this House, the proceedings to-night remind me very much of a mutual admiration society. We have the Premier speaking to my motion and intimating that if I put it in the form of a request for a return, I will

get the information I seek. It takes me back to the time when I was new to this Assembly, and when I thought I could get information by way of questions. Members will perhaps remember that I asked 87 questions at one sitting. On that occasion I earned the nickname of "the member for Pickering Brook," awarded me by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker). In response to the 87 questions I got 87 futilities in reply. I will not submit myself to a like procedure on this occasion. I am surprised at a member with the Parliamentary experience of the Leader of the Opposition, contending that I could get satisfaction by asking questions.

Hon. P. Collier: I said I could get any information I desired in the form of a question.

Mr. PICKERING: It seems strange to me that we should have the Premier adopting this attitude regarding the Wyndham Meat Works in view of the methods he pursued in the past. It is absurd to say that I can get any such information as I desire regarding the management by way of question, instead of by way of the inquiry I suggest.

Hon. P. Collier: You could get the necessary information from Ministers during the debate on the Estimates.

Mr. PICKERING: The hon. member knows I could not get anything of the sort.

Hon. P. Collier: You could get any information you required then, just as you could from a select committee.

The Minister for Agriculture: Have you tried first hand?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair. I will see that he gets protection.

Mr. PICKERING: I shall have to ask for protection from the Minister for Agriculture. It seems to me that if the Premier or the Leader of the Opposition thinks he can throw dust in the eyes of the people as suggested to-night, they are very much mistaken. If members of this House think this is not a pertinent inquiry, they have no appreciation of the feeling throughout Western Australia regarding the Wyndham Meat Works.

Hon. P. Collier: How do you know what the feeling is?

Mr. PICKERING: From contact with the leading business people in the State.

Hon. P. Collier: The usual kerbstone information!

Mr. PICKERING: Call it what you like; that casts no reflection upon the people giving me the information.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a fact.

Mr. PICKERING: People want to know what the Government are going to do with these works.

The Minister for Agriculture: And they go to you to ask you to get the information.

Mr. PICKERING: They do not come to me for that purpose. I have more intelligence than the Minister for Agriculture—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Sussex to refrain from these remarks; he must address the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: I ask for protection from the Minister for Agriculture.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: These interjections must cease.

Mr. PICKERING: Notwithstanding what may be said to the contrary it is impossible to get information in this Chamber from Ministers.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not correct.

Mr. PICKERING: I make that statement with a full sense of my responsibilities.

Hon. P. Collier: You must have been very unfortunate.

Mr. PICKERING: A prominent feature of the Premier's discourses since the session opened, has been the contention that the position of the trading concerns and public utilities has resulted in the increase in the deficit.

The Premier: I said it was largely due to the public utilities.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you think the appointment of this select committee will help?

Mr. PICKERING: It might assist in that direction.

Mr. Simons: Would you send the select committee to Wyndham?

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, if necessary. The Premier has laboured the question of the loss on these trading concerns. It would be for the select committee to bring forward a definite proposition as to the best course to be pursued in connection with these works.

Hon. P. Collier: That is for the House to determine and not the select committee.

Mr. PICKERING: The select committee will report to the House.

Hon. P. Collier: The House is capable of pronouncing on that question.

Mr. PICKERING: The House cannot very well express an opinion unless the course I suggest is pursued.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not so. The hon. member can force an expression of opinion if he likes to do so. All he has to do is to move that the meat works be disposed of and he can get an expression of opinion.

Mr. PICKERING: Members have on several occasions advocated a select committee or a Royal Commission to discuss such matters as the dismissal of a civil servant.

Hon. P. Collier: I have never moved for a select committee. The hon. member has moved for more select committees this session than I have during the last 16 years.

Mr. PICKERING: When it comes to a question of £900,000 of the people's money lying idle at the Wyndham Meat Works, I am told that we must not consider the question. I am told that the information can be obtained by way of a question and that the appointment of a select committee should not be considered. Information dealing with the management and business transactions cannot be elicited by means of any form of question. The

only way the country can know the true position is by way of a searching inquiry into the whole question. When I first dealt with this question I moved for a Royal Commission because I thought that was the proper course to pursue. I was advised by several members that the proper way was to apply for a select committee. In my unwisdom, I changed the form of the motion from a request for a Royal Commission to one for a select committee. If I made a mistake, I am sorry. I hope the people of this State will realise that if they desire to get satisfaction in such a matter, pressure has to be brought to bear upon the Government. The member for North-East Flemantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) said something about the cost of the Wyndham Meat Works, and I interjected that the works were over-capitalised. The source from which I obtained my information as to the amount necessary to be written down in order to bring the works to a payable basis, was Pearse's work entitled "The Meat Future of the World." Upon the information I gleaned from that book, I fixed the sum which was necessary to be written down to enable the works to be operated with profit, at from £350,000 to £400,000. It cannot be alleged that I have been advocating the interests of anyone. In the past, in presenting motions to the House, I have experienced all sorts of nasty insinuations as to how I got my information and as to the course I advocated. I am never ashamed to advocate publicly anything I bring forward in this Chamber. I obtain information by all the legitimate means at my disposal. It has been difficult to get the information, but I have not spared myself in the task of procuring it in a legitimate way, by studying returns and every other information possible to obtain. As to the writing down of these works, I contend that by doing so to an extent which would enable us to work them or lease them, whether to a co-operative company or some other company, we would be doing something to relieve the State of part of the deficit.

The Premier: Do you think we could get any company to lease them?

Mr. PICKERING: Let us try. That is one aspect regarding which I desire a select committee to seek information with a view to ascertaining the best means of relieving the burden which is oppressing the State at present. It has been said that the Government side of the House has a definite policy regarding the State trading concerns. I very much doubt it.

Hon. P. Collier: I think your main difficulty is that you have no faith in the Government at all.

Mr. PICKERING: The hon. member can think anything he likes.

Hon. P. Collier: All your arguments tend that way.

Mr. PICKERING: I am arguing that the condition of the works necessitates this inquiry.

Hon. P. Collier: You say the Government have no policy.

Mr. PICKERING: I say there is a conspiracy in this House to defeat any inquiry. No one wants an inquiry. Let us go on drifting: it does not matter. Do not let us take any steps to rid ourselves of our difficulties.

Mr. O'Loughlen: On with the dance!

Mr. PICKERING: It does not seem to matter a "tuppenny" damn; the people have to pay.

Hon. P. Collier: On with the dance of death; we are jazzing to eternity.

Mr. PICKERING: I feel that I have no hope of securing the appointment of a select committee. I have had an opportunity of saying what I think about the Wyndham Meat Works. I have had an opportunity of telling the country what I think.

Hon. P. Collier: And the country is unconcerned.

Mr. PICKERING: It does not matter; the country will know that there is an honest man in the House.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And it is something to discover that fact.

Mr. PICKERING: So long as I represent my constituents in this House I will deal with the affairs of the country as I deem best. If there is anything wrong with the state of Denmark, I will bring the matter forward, and endeavour to clear up the position in the best interests of Western Australia.

Question put and negatived.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

RETURN—PUBLIC SERVICE.

Cost of Holiday and Other Leave.

Debate resumed from 7th September on following motion by Mr. A. Thomson:—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—(a) The total cost to the State for the year ended the 30th June, 1921, for annual holidays for State employees (exclusive of the Railway Department); (b) The cost for the same period for long service leave; (c) The cost for the same period for sick leave.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell, Northam) [9.42]: I do not know that there is much objection to the hon. member securing the information asked for, but I do not know that when he gets the information, it will be of much use to him. The question of leave is a fixed thing and if the hon. member desires to know all about it, he can take the Public Service List and work out just what happens. There are some civil servants of course, who do not take their long service leave. At any rate, the question of leave

is part of the terms of employment of each civil servant. In addition to long service leave, there is annual leave, with certain other leave during the year. The position, I think, is fairly well understood by the House. If the member wishes to get the information, I have no objection to supplying it.

Mr. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [9.44]: I endorse the attitude adopted by the Leader of the Opposition when this motion was introduced. If it is furnished as desired by the hon. member it will only be misleading and give the public an entirely wrong impression, especially so far as it refers to the total cost to the State for the year ended 30th June, 1921, for annual holidays for State employees, exclusive of the Railway Department. That will mean that for every week's holiday a State employee has, the return will show that week as valued according to the salary received by the individual civil servant. That will be entirely misleading, because there are many departments where no extra hands are employed, in order to relieve members of the staff, who are on annual leave. The men who are not on leave carry on the work and if it is not done, the civil servant who is absent has to attend to it when he returns from his holidays. To be fair at all, a further return would have to be compiled showing the period of overtime worked by the public servants in catching up arrears which had accrued while they were away from office. It would run into a considerable figure. Why is complaint made that annual leave is given? It appears to me it is in order to show, if possible, that the State is paying something it should not be called upon to pay. As a matter of fact, all these so-called concessions are taken into account when the salaries and conditions of employment are fixed. But can it be argued that it is only public servants who enjoy those conditions? I do not call them concessions, or even privileges. They are absolute rights. It is time all employees throughout the State received at least a fortnight's holiday per annum. In recent years the Arbitration Court has taken that stand, and Mr. Justice Burnside in particular has often told the employers appearing before the court that it was only a business proposition that they should give their staffs a fortnight's annual leave, since they would be more than repaid for the time lost, by the improved efficiency of the employee on his return. Scores of classes of private employees now receive annual leave equal to, and in some instances beyond, the period granted to public servants. All shop assistants, all waitresses in houses open seven days a week, all barbers, barmen and barmaids, all employed in the printing trade, and in nearly all the industries that have been before the court in recent years, now receive annual leave. Why, then, are the public servants singled out in this motion? What is the object in

holding them up to the public gaze by attempting to show that the annual leave granted to them represents a cost of such and such a sum? It is merely to create public prejudice against public servants, and try to make it appear that the State is carrying a burden which it should not be asked to carry. No return prepared under paragraph (a) can show the true position; it can only show the value of the holidays in terms of the weekly wages. Such a return would be entirely misleading and would give a false impression to the public. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be deleted.

Mr. Chesson: Knock out the whole of the motion.

Mr. McCALLUM: We will knock it out piecemeal, deleting paragraph (a) for a start.

On motion by Mr. Angelo, debate adjourned.

RETURN—RAILWAYS, PRIVILEGE AND FREE PASSES.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from 7th September of the debate on the following motion by Mr. A. Thomson:—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—(a) The cost to the Railway Department for privilege tickets for the year ended 30th June, 1921; (b) The cost of free passes issued to railway employees for the same period; (c) The cost of free passes over interstate railways; (d) The cost to the Railway Department for annual holidays for the same period; (e) The cost of payment for sick leave; (f) The cost of free passes for members of Parliament.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, debate adjourned.

RETURN—UNIMPROVED LAND.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from 7th September of the debate on the following motion by Mr. A. Thomson:—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing the area of unimproved land held privately or by the Government within seven miles of existing railways.

Question put and negatived.

MOTION—FEDERATION AND THE STATE.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from 7th September on the following motion by Mr. Angelo:—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable in view of the contemplated convention to review the Federal Constitution, that

a joint select committee of both Houses of the Western Australian Parliament be appointed to inquire as to the effect of the Federal compact has had upon the finances and industries of Western Australia, and to advise as to what amendments of the Constitution are desirable in the interests of the State.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [9.52]: The question requires a little consideration. Naturally, from the point of view of the Government, it would be very desirable to hand over to a select committee the responsibility of considering this matter. But it is altogether too important a question to permit of the Government shirking any of their responsibility. They must have available all information desired in order to protect the interests of the State in regard to the forthcoming convention to be appointed to deal with the Federal Constitution. Personally I have no objection to the appointment of a select committee, but I venture to say that all the information they will obtain is already available in the departments. Other than that, the most they could hope to secure would be expressions of opinion by individual citizens, which might or might not be of value. The Government already have available, to be submitted through the convention, or any other channel, the case for Western Australia. I do not think anybody suggests that we should in any way attempt to secede from the Federation. While we may feel that we have not been treated by the Federal authorities as well as we ought to have been, that they have not taken into consideration that we have a huge territory to develop, and that we gave up the Customs and many other privileges in order to join the Federal bond, yet in my opinion to talk secession at this stage of our history is merely to beat the air.

Mr. Angelo: You will have the "Sunday Times" saying, "Buck up, Scaddan, buck up."

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A far greater personage than I once said, "Abuse me if you will, applaud me if you so desire, but for God's sake don't ignore me." I do not at all mind if the "Sunday Times" wishes to talk "Buck up, Scaddan"; perhaps it will help them sell their issues if they talk about me. But if they suggest "buck up" to the member for Gascoyne, I would advise them to cry, "Roll on, brother." As I have said, I have no objection to the select committee, but I do not think they will get the information they expect. They will not be able to present the case for Western Australia any better than will the Government. The hon. member can rest assured that the Government will not withhold anything likely to put our position before the convention in a manner calculated to induce the Federal Parliament to do what is right by this State.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.57]: In the final analysis of any consideration of this

question, the responsibility of preparing the case for Western Australia must rest on the Government. The Government, with the assistance of the expert departmental officers, who have access to all the information, are in the best position to compile the case for the State. In that respect I do not think a select committee would be of much assistance, that it would unearth any additional facts, or in any way strengthen the case for Western Australia as against the treatment received at the hands of the Federal Parliament. But I think there would be this advantage in having the matter inquired into by a select committee composed of members of the House: that any report or recommendation made by the committee would necessarily carry more weight, would impress not only the people of this State but the people of the other States as well, to a greater extent than would any report compiled by a departmental officer. We have already a most excellent report compiled by Mr. Owen. But, as I say, any finding by a select committee would get greater publicity and would carry greater weight than would a report by any Government officer. I support the motion on those grounds: not that I think it would result in the securing of any more information than we already have, but that it would strengthen our case in this direction I have indicated. It would bring the whole question prominently under the notice of the electors of this State and of other States, too, and it would be well at this juncture, seeing that we are approaching the time when we must elect delegates to the convention to consider the whole of the Federal Constitution, for we cannot have too much publicity given to the case as it affects Western Australia. I have no desire to go over the ground covered in this House and outside of it in recent years with regard to the treatment received by this State from the Federal authorities. I know from my own personal experience, as does everyone who has been a member of the Ministry during the past 10 years, that we have had anything but a fair deal in many respects from the Federal authorities. I do not charge the men who comprise the Federal authority with any lack of sympathy towards Western Australia. I do not charge them with being unconcerned regarding the welfare of this outpost of the Commonwealth. It is only natural that when most of a man's time is spent in a capital city such as Melbourne, he becomes a creature of his environment and is unconsciously biased in favour of the State in which he is living. Such men are living in an atmosphere into which Western Australia does not enter. They do not read the Western Australian newspapers extensively, but they read every morning the point of view presented to them by the daily papers of Melbourne and Sydney, and in the course of long years of residence in the Eastern States, although they may pay an occasional visit to Western Australia, their point of view becomes coloured by their immediate surroundings. The result has been that a

great deal of legislation and administration has been centred where the power and influence in numbers, money, and otherwise, are found, namely, in Melbourne and Sydney, and the outlying portions of the Commonwealth, such as Western Australia, and to a lesser degree some of the other States, have received very little consideration indeed. Consequently, I think it would be well to appoint a select committee. To use a phrase made famous by the Premier many years ago when he was defending a clause in a Bill which it was hard to defend by argument, he finally, in sheer desperation, declared, "It will do no harm, anyhow." The hon. member had failed to convince the House that it would do any good, and as a last resort, he pleaded that it could do no harm. I do not take the view that this committee will merely do no harm. I think that it will do a great amount of good, and that the House will be wise to agree to the motion moved by the member for Gascoyne.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.4]: I am of opinion that a select committee such as has been suggested might accomplish a great deal of good. The convention will meet, I hope, within the next six months; I do not think it will meet earlier. We in this State shall have to elect representatives. I do not know exactly by what means they will be elected, but it is quite possible they will be elected by the people. If this is so, it is quite possible that members of Parliament may be chosen as delegates, and such a choice would be a wise one, because the men here know just what the effect of Federation has been on this State. This convention will be a cold-blooded business. When the previous convention met, its duty was to frame the Constitution and bring Federation into existence. We have had some experience of Federation, and we know its disadvantages to the State. We know, too, that the Federal authority was expected to live on the revenue derived from the Customs tariff. In fact, it was calculated that the Customs revenue would provide more than sufficient, and that from the surplus we would get some return. For some years the Federal authorities did live fairly economically and cheaply, but the same cannot be said of recent years. Not only have we lost practically the whole of the Customs revenue, but the Federal Government are imposing taxation in every possible direction. There is hardly a channel of taxation of which they have not availed themselves down to the tax on amusements. The time has come when the States will have to put their case, and put it very strongly. This State is altogether undeveloped. While the Federal Treasurer has a surplus, and a good big one, too, it is money which should be returned to the States; yet we in Western Australia are faced with a deficit.

Hon. P. Collier: They have invaded all our avenues of taxation, and have a surplus.

The PREMIER: The surplus belongs to the States, and used to be returned to the States. It ought to be returned to the States now, because there can be no progress or development in Australia apart from the States. This being the case, we ought to put our arguments strongly. To the revenue of the Commonwealth, we contribute a considerable amount per head of the population. We contribute not only the amounts which are placed on record, but other amounts by way of Customs duty on material which is used in Western Australia. I do not know exactly what is paid by our people, but it must be a very considerable amount in the aggregate. We are entitled to say to the Commonwealth that in this work of development they should stand a share. When we bring people to this country, they begin to pay Federal taxation the moment they land at our ports. As soon as they drink a cup of tea or a glass of beer, they begin to contribute to the Federal revenue. From the day they land they pay Federal taxation, but for a year or two they contribute very little to the revenue of the State. If we are to develop our country, we must defend our revenues. Members know full well that if we are going to develop a considerable area of land during the coming year, we shall have to borrow a large sum of money, and on that we shall have to pay interest without getting any return at all. If it is to be spent on settlement in the Wheat Belt, then for a year or two we shall have nothing coming in. Though we have to pay interest on the borrowed money, the settler pays us nothing during the first few years. I have already told members how many millions we shall have to find for the work of developing the South-West. We are adding to our interest bill as a result of the money we are using for this work of development. If we have to continue to bear the whole of this charge, and if the Federal Treasurer is going to continue to invade every avenue of taxation, I do not know what is going to happen. I shall have to tell the House in a few days' time that I am paying a great deal of interest on money used for this work of development, expenditure which cannot bring us a return for a year or two. We must of necessity continue this work of development; otherwise we shall never be able to get out of our financial difficulties. Apart from this consideration, it is our responsibility to continue it. When we federated we agreed, foolishly I think, to undertake all the responsibility which means anything at all to the individual, while the Federal Government assumed the responsibility for defence—which it is true has proved costly—the Post Office, the Customs and one or two other things. The rest of the responsibility is ours, and yet the Commonwealth collect practically all the

money. Federal taxation, too, is on a very much higher scale than ours. All these questions should be looked into carefully. I think, as the Leader of the Opposition has remarked, that the information must come largely from the departments; yet, it will come with much greater force if it has behind it the authority of a select committee of Parliament. Then, too, an inquiry by a select committee will also provide an opportunity for men engaged in our industries to give evidence. Our farmers who have to submit to high taxation on their agricultural machinery and in other ways will be able to explain the effect of the tariff upon their calling. Merchants and manufacturers will have an opportunity to explain what is standing in the way of progress. These opportunities will be provided by the appointment of a select committee, and I think that some men outside of Government departments who have given attention to these questions, will be ready to appear and tender evidence. I daresay we shall get some valuable information in this way. When the member for Gascoyne last moved in this direction—

Mr. Angelo: That was 12 months ago.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is an older and wiser man now. I hope he does not object to being reminded that he is older.

Mr. Angelo: Unfortunately, I have to admit it.

The PREMIER: Still the hon. member looks younger. At any rate, I think the motion now before the House is a wise one. The object is to appoint a joint select committee of the two Houses. I hope that the members who are appointed to it will realise the responsibility that devolves upon them. It will be cold, hard work. If it is to be of any use, they will have to bring out hard facts. They must deal with facts, because their conclusions will be very closely scrutinised by practical Federal officials anyhow. The task will not be an easy one; in fact, I think I can say it will be a very difficult one, and will be very important work. I hope the House will approve of the motion.

Captain CARTER (Leederville) [10.13]: I think that I am right in assuming, although none of the previous speakers has mentioned it, that this select committee will have an opportunity of preparing the case in defence or rebuttal of the probable attempt of the Federal authorities to cut away or reduce the capitation grant. I was surprised that this matter was not mentioned by the Premier, because it is one of vital importance.

The Premier: That will not be touched by this committee of inquiry.

Captain CARTER: This committee will have an opportunity to prepare the case for Western Australia, and for that reason I favour its appointment. This is a most serious matter, affecting a sum approximating half a million a year. If members multiply

the per capita grant or 25s. by the sum total of our population, they will find that it works out roughly at half a million pounds. If a reduction is made—I do not think that any reduction ought to be made—it will prove a serious blow to our financial position. If this committee does nothing else than prepare the case in defence of our situation financially and the proposed inroad upon our income from the Federal source, its appointment will have been justified. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, and I hope the committee will be very thorough in its investigations.

Question put and passed.

Message to the Council.

On motion by Mr. Angelo resolved: "That the resolution be transmitted by message to the Legislative Council and its concurrence desired therein."

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th September, 1921.

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

QUESTION—STATE SAVINGS BANK, AND COMMONWEALTH.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH asked the Premier: 1. Have there been any negotiations for the handing over of the State Savings Bank to the Commonwealth Bank? 2. If so, how far have the negotiations proceeded? 3. What is the Government policy in regard to the future of the Savings Bank?

The PREMIER replied: 1. Yes, from time to time over many years. 2. Nothing definite has ever been arrived at. Parliament would be immediately informed should any change be contemplated.