

on very many occasions. And it may have involved their departure from office. It does not involve their being ostracised by society. We have no justification for accusing the Minister of dishonourable collusion with Berteaux. What we have accused him of is neglect of duty as custodian of the funds of the State, and that is a sufficient charge, in my opinion, to warrant a vote of censure. Votes of censure have been made against individual members before as they have been made against Cabinets, and when the member for Kalgoorlie tries to bring in that question to obscure the issue raised he is reducing the debate to a very low level, indeed. I have no desire after the long discussion which has taken place, to go into this matter at any greater length except to say that throughout this State and the other States, it has come to be regarded by men of all shades of opinion and by men of all classes that while it may be dishonourable to do certain things in private life, it is only a trivial offence to take down the Government whether it be by getting at them through the Railway Department or through the customs, and it is regarded as a clever thing to take down the Government of the State. That is a wrong opinion to hold, and we as members of Parliament, should be above countenancing it. It is because people will say by the action taken with regard to this charge that we are countenancing that view which is held by so many, that it is desirable we should emphasise our distaste for such an opinion being held by members of this House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	20
Noes	26

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McDowall
Mr. Bath	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Bolton	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gill	Mr. Swan
Mr. Gourley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. Walker
Mr. Holman	Mr. Ware
Mr. Horan	Mr. Troy
Mr. Hudson	
Mr. Johnson	

(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Layman
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Male
Mr. Carson	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Monger
Mr. Daglish	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Davies	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Draper	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Osborn
Mr. George	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Gregory	Mr. J. Price
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Jacoby	
Mr. Keenan	(Teller).

Question thus negatived.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Electoral Act Amendment.
 2. Transfer of Land Act Amendment.
- Received from the Legislative Council.

House adjourned at 11.30 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 10th December, 1909.

	PAGE
Obituary, Letter in reply	2057
Urgency Motion: Railway Employees' grievances ..	2058
Bills: Goomalling-Wongan Hills Railway, &c., &c. ..	2115
Dowarin-Meredin Railway, &c., &c.	2135
Annual Estimates, Vote (Agriculture) discussed	2138

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

OBITUARY—LETTER IN REPLY.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the representatives of the late Mr. Robert Sholl:—

"251 St. George's Terrace, Perth.

The Speaker, Legislative Assembly.

Dear Sir,—On behalf of my mother and the other members of our family, I have to thank you and the members of the Legislative Assembly for your kind note expressing your sincere sym-

pathies for us in our great loss, and also for the kind references made by your Assembly on Tuesday last to our dear father. We all recognise and appreciate the feelings of honour and esteem which prompted such kindly words spoken by honourable members of your Assembly. Thanking you again for your kindness, I remain, yours very sincerely. (Signed) GUY T. SHOLL.

9th December, 1909.

URGENCY MOTION—RAILWAY EMPLOYEES' GRIEVANCES.

Mr. SWAN (North Perth): Before the ordinary business of the day is proceeded with I desire, on a matter of urgency, to move the adjournment of the House, with a view to drawing attention to a definite matter of urgent importance, namely, the serious grievances under which railway employees are suffering and which, if not remedied, may lead to industrial trouble.

Seven members having risen in their places.

Mr. SWAN said: In moving the adjournment of the House on this question I suppose, as usual, it will be considered that it is done principally for the purpose of obstructing public business; that is the kind of thing generally attributed to anything of the sort when it comes from this (Opposition) side of the House.

Mr. Gordon: This is probably an exception.

The Premier: You might have had the courtesy to let me know you were going to move the adjournment.

Mr. SWAN: It is an exception. In respect to the Premier's interjection, I may say I have not purposely been discourteous to the Premier. Hon. members will realise that when I say this is the first time I have taken on the responsibility of moving the adjournment of the House, and it never occurred to me until I saw the Premier this afternoon that it would be the correct thing to notify him. After all, I think the Premier should realise quite well that there is nothing intentional on my part.

The Premier: Oh, no, of course not.

Mr. SWAN: Moreover, I do not think it is placing the Minister in any very serious difficulty, because the whole of the questions I intend to deal with have been very thoroughly discussed with the Minister for Railways and also with the Premier. I think Ministers are fairly well seized of the points to be considered. I realise that only in a case of urgency should a motion of this description be moved. I am not going in for what the Premier calls "kite-flying," but on this occasion I am satisfied that unless something is done to set right the grievances under which the railway employees, officers and men, are labouring to-day, we, in a very few days, will be face to face with a serious industrial trouble. And I am speaking as one who knows the men. At other times we have had trouble with the railway employees, but on this occasion it is more serious than ever before.

The Premier: It might have been fixed up without moving the adjournment of the House.

Mr. SWAN: I think reasonable efforts have been put forward, not only by the officers and men but also by members on this side of the House, to bring about a settlement, but I must say that so far as the Commissioner of Railways is concerned, he does not seem to realise the seriousness of the position at all. With regard to the officers, it appears to me that he has been so long used to seeing these men treated more like blacks than officers of an important public department that he thinks the worm will never turn. I had 13 years' experience in the employment of the Railway Department. As a representative of the men, I have had trouble with Commissioners of Railways, but at no time during the 13 years I was in touch with the Railway Department have the men been treated with such scant courtesy as they have been treated by Mr. Short during his term of office. From the highest to the lowest he does not seem to seriously consider the rights of the men at all. I want to try and make hon. members understand this position as clearly as I

understand it myself. To-day in almost every department of the railway service, or at least so far as the Traffic Branch is concerned, we have a serious state of discontent. There are scarcely any of the employees of the Traffic Department, wages or salaried men either, who are not very much dissatisfied.

The Minister for Railways: Not if you can avoid it.

Mr. SWAN: I like that from the Minister for Railways. The Minister is taking on a pretty tough proposition when he sets me like that. I know as much about the railways as he does. I have never attacked him, but I will place the House in possession of some of the things the Minister has done in regard to the railways if he throws interjections of that sort at me. I have no desire to place him in an unfair position, and I will not allow him by interjection or in any other way to place me in an unfair position. I have had to battle for the railway men for years, and that not because it was necessary on my own behalf. I am not going to allow him to sit quietly down and infer that I go out of my way to create trouble.

Mr. Heilmann: Throw a Blue Book at him.

Mr. SWAN: I will throw some logic at him.

Mr. Underwood: Logic will never hurt him.

The Premier: Oh, get on with your case.

Mr. SWAN: I do not want the Minister to infer that I am taking an unfair stand in this matter. No one is better seized of the grievances of the railway men than I am, and I want to place other hon. members in the same position as myself in regard to an intimate knowledge of the conditions of the employees of this big department. I suppose had it not been for my connection with the organisation of these men I would not have been here to-day. The Minister will say this was the reason of my association with this particular organisation; but, fortunately, my reputation is proof against all the sneers of the Minister. I am prepared to have my association

with the railway men placed in the broad light of day, notwithstanding the cheap sneers of the Minister. I was saying before being interrupted that I believe the Commissioner of Railways is not as well seized with the discontent that exists in the service as he should be, although he is the individual who is, I think, very largely responsible for this discontent. If hon. members analyse the position of the Railway Department they will find that the least discontent exists in those departments about which the Commissioner knows the least. I will tell why this is so. The Commissioner of Railways knows very little about the Locomotive and Way and Works branches, which is no news to hon. members, and compared with other departments these branches are fairly content; but the discontent is in the Traffic Branch, with which the Commissioner has been connected for many years in various capacities. He is very proud of telling how he occupied the position of porter and shunter and so on, but he is very forgetful of the duties he was called upon to perform when he occupied such a position as that of a shunter. I have heard him express solicitude for the shunters, and he shows it by paying shunters the magnificent salary of 7s. 6d. a day, notwithstanding the dangerous occupation they are engaged in. This is the way he shows his solicitude for the people working under him. However, first of all I want to deal with the officers. Their trouble is the most serious among a number of serious grievances. It was said by the Commissioner at a conference that he had at no time reduced the salary of any officer. That is incorrect. There are different ways of reducing men's salaries. I have said in the House before, dealing with the question of the wages men, that wages were reduced after the arbitration award in an indirect way, though the Minister for Railways then claimed that no reduction had been made. The reduction is made something on these lines. A man receiving from £120 to £130 a year is moved into the position previously occupied by a man receiving, perhaps, £190 a year,

but his salary is not increased. This thing goes on right through the service. I will be told it is an isolated instance; but I know it is not; I know it is practically the policy of the Railway Department; and I am going to insist on saying it; and I am prepared to prove it notwithstanding any arguments the Minister for Railways will trot along directly. I do not blame the Minister very much; he only takes the information given to him by Mr. Short; but I can prove up to the hilt this thing is done, and that it is practically the policy of the department to use this means of reducing men's salaries. There are other instances which are, perhaps, known to other hon. members, for instance, where a stationmaster receiving £190 is removed to the position of a man with a higher salary but gets no increase, while another man receiving £130 is moved into his position and does not get any increase. What kind of decent treatment is that to mete out? Even without getting so low down as stationmasters it applies. The policy in this direction in the Railway Department is absolutely rotten. The country is crying out for capable men to manage its railways. We have not got capable management yet, and while Mr. Short is there we are not likely to get it. The Chief Mechanical Engineer, who has control of the Locomotive Department, a department possessing one of the most up-to-date workshops in the world, and some of the most up-to-date locomotives of their class in the world, and with everything else in keeping, receives £850 a year. He is an old friend of mine and it is not at all likely I am going to attack him personally. I am not even going to say whether he has the capacity for the position. I know that as a practical man he has no superior in Australasia, but whether he has the capabilities required for controlling a big department like that I do not know. I do know that where we have a department carrying out the important works carried out by this department, such as the construction of locomotives and other big works, £850 is no salary to pay. There is no more important work carried out in the Locomotive Departments of other States than

is carried out here, and I know that in the other States of the Commonwealth we will not find men in charge of these departments receiving less than £1,000 a year. The only man who has not been made to suffer a reduction in salary by this method of transferring to another position is the Commissioner of Railways, and, of course, his salary is controlled by Act of Parliament. Every other departmental head is practically in the same position as the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and is not receiving the salary he is entitled to for the position he holds. If these men are not competent to control these departments as they should be controlled, the sooner we get men capable of doing the work the better, and the sooner we pay better salaries the better. Where a State is taking on the responsibility of constructing its own rolling stock it cannot afford to have cheap men in control, and if a man like the Chief Mechanical Engineer is not worth more than £850 he should be fired out and another man capable of filling the position should be imported or got from somewhere. However, I want it to be distinctly understood that I am not saying a word against the capabilities of the Chief Mechanical Engineer, but I say this is where the principle of cutting down and cheap and paltry management starts.

The Minister for Works: He has not been cut down.

Mr. SWAN: I did not say he had been.

Mr. Johnson: His increments have been stopped.

Mr. SWAN: A man in his position should not be subjected to £50 increases and that sort of tiddley-winking. If we want a man to control the Locomotive Branch in this State why not pay him a decent salary of at least £1,000 a year.

The Minister for Works: That is only a matter of opinion.

Mr. SWAN: I have a strong opinion on this matter, and I have a great determination to give expression to it.

The Minister for Works: Is that your trouble, the Chief Mechanical Engineer?

Mr. SWAN: I am only using his case to emphasise the fact that this is the principle that pervades the whole de-

partment. The Chief Mechanical Engineer has not been very long in his position, but the man previously occupying the position got considerably more than £850 a year. If Mr. Hume was considered capable of filling the post why was he not given the salary attached to the position? We are losing money every day while we are going in for this cheap kind of administration. But, however, I am only citing his case to emphasise the fact that this is the policy pursued by the Railway Department from the top to the bottom; and it is pursued with greater vigour the further we get down the ladder. The nearer we get to the man starving on 6s. 6d. a day the more bitterly they are pursuing their dirty retrenchment and this paltry policy of economy. I know perfectly well the seriousness of the statements I am making, and I know what I am talking about; I am not speaking without my book. Stationmasters have been used in the way I have pointed out, and night officers and telegraphists—in fact, it is the policy of the whole department. We have officers in various parts of the service. How are these officers treated? Fancy men on stations throughout the State in the position of officers in charge and night officers in responsible positions, called upon to work 12 hours a night practically every night in the year! This is one of the grievances we are complaining about. They are working, it does not matter whether it is Sunday or not, every day and they get a yearly salary, but they get no consideration. Although they may be called upon to work 10 or 15 hours on Sunday it is not taken into consideration. They get absolutely no consideration for Sunday work except a number of days off during the year. A few years ago officers working 84 hours a week, as they did at some stations, were given one night off a week, plus their ordinary annual leave. That was much more satisfactory than the position that exists to-day. We are told that there is no retrenchment and lessening of privileges to these men, but we find that position has been altered, and to-day these men are engaged every night in the year, on

Sundays and every other day, and are allowed 15 days' leave half-yearly, which represents to them a loss of 34 days in the year. That is all the leave they get. They previously got one day a week in addition to their ordinary annual leave. That is another of the grievances these people complain of. Even in regard to officers whose increments are provided for in the regulations and distinctly laid down, and, in my opinion, recoverable by law, the department have failed to pay these increases. I am given to understand they are to be paid this year. For two years, although the regulations provide the officers must get £10 increases each year until they reach £150 per annum, they have not received any increases. We are told Mr. Short is going to be particularly generous this year, and that because he did not give them a £10 increase last year he is going to give them £20 this year. It has not occurred to the Commissioner that he is taking these officers down for £10 to which they are legally entitled. As a matter of fact he does not think it is worth considering; but that is the position. He makes a monthful of the fact that he is giving a £20 instead of a £10 increase, but he does not say anything about giving them the £10 due to them last year. This is another of the things these men complain about. The fact that he withheld that increase for one year means that they are losing £10 for every year during the period to which these increases apply. Another case I know of in connection with the officers is one that shows the same consideration is evidently not given to officers of the Railway Department as is given to those in other parts of the public service. We have had a beautiful scheme explained to us by various Ministers at different times as to the method adopted for dealing with the reclassification of the public service. Those who had to be reduced on account of their positions being classified at a lower salary were reduced so much per year, but those that were below their minimums were gradually brought up to them, but I know of the case of an officer in the Railway Department, with 15

years' service and an irreproachable record, who was receiving £265 a year, and who, through some retrenchment or amalgamation scheme, was reduced £35 last year, and was notified that he would be reduced a further £30 next year. In two years they reduced that man's salary from £265 to £200 and that after 15 years' service. Perhaps the Minister has no personal knowledge of such cases, but that shows the Commissioner is not giving the man a fair deal. Unless members take some steps to see that a fair deal is given to these men, the time will arrive when the men will be in a position to demand and get a fair deal. That is their position to-day. The Commissioner was evidently so used to these men taking anything thrown to them that he thought they would never turn; but the time has arrived when the officers, having an organisation worthy of being called one, and which is prepared to place the men's grievances fairly and squarely before the authorities, will fight for their position, and I give them every credit for doing so. The insinuation of the Minister was absolutely unfair that I encouraged them to be discontented. I have never encouraged them, and I do not go round trying to stir up discontent.

Mr. Heitmann: I would do so, seeing their position.

Mr. SWAN: Every time a man shows me that he suffers some injustice in the Railway Department, or in fact in any branch of work, I will try and get him a fair deal. More particularly is this state of things disgraceful considering it is in a department which is the largest revenue earning one in the State. The Railway Department comes to the rescue of the finances of the country every year, and the men who are the main factors in bringing about the surplus are treated in this way. Does the Premier consider they get a fair deal? Does the Minister think the Commissioner alone is responsible for the surplus, and that no credit is due to the men? Western Australia is in a wonderfully good position in regard to her railway service, for we have some of the ablest officers in the Commonwealth.

The Premier: There are a terrible lot of men wanting to get into the service.

Mr. SWAN: I suppose I know more railway men than anyone else in this House, and I can prove the truth of my statement with regard to their worth. Then we have the advantage of most of the men in the service being comparatively young. In the other States the employees are nearly all grey-bearded men. On thing that can be said on that score is that with the present Commissioner there is no danger of ever seeing any grey bearded men here. I have had to fight this question of old men with other Railway Commissioners besides the present one, and will do so every time. Before I get away from the question of the officers I want to point out that the chief grievance, after all, is the fact that they are called upon to work many of the stations continuously, in some places 9 hours and in many places 12 hours a day. The Minister may question that, but I do not believe either the Minister or the Premier is fully seized of the true position of these men. I guarantee that if they go into the question in detail and find out the hours these men work, and where they are continuously employed on fairly hard work, they will find that what I say is correct. It is said that we are claiming for men who are on stations where there are but two trains a day, one-and-a-half time for Sunday. We do not claim anything of the kind, for we realise that where men only have two trains a day to attend to we should not bind the department to the same conditions that should exist in the busy centres. If that is the real opinion, I am sure he would say that he believes with me that on the suburban stations, and in other stations where the work is continuous, when the men are called upon to work on Sundays, they should be paid for Sunday work. That is one of the men's main grievances, and I am going to do all I can to assist them to have that grievance remedied. Anything further to be said on behalf of the officers will possibly be said by some other member. The member for Murray might say something. I want members distinctly to understand that the officers are not the only ones concerned in this

trouble. A very large number of the wages staff are also in a state of revolt against the existing conditions. I think I see an incredulous smile creeping over the Premeir's face, but there is no question about what I say being correct. I want to point out what took place in connection with the principal grievances the men are labouring under. If members follow me closely they will form a good idea of the sort of fair-minded gentleman we have controlling the railways of the State to-day. Members will understand that there are two large industrial organisations representing two sections of the railway employees, apart from the officers' organisation. We have the Engine-drivers', Firemen's, and Cleaners' Union representing all the running staff of the Locomotive Department. They form a separate industrial organisation, and entered into a separate industrial agreement with the Commissioner. Then there is the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees that represents men of all trades and callings in the service. There are men of practically every calling that one could imagine in that association. There are also trades' unions representing various classes of men employed in the workshops. Owing to the fight they put up in bygone days, the tradesmen have secured an eight hours' day. There is no question of 48 hours a week with them. It is not because of the consideration of this Railway Commissioner, or any other, that the tradesmen are in that position. They fought and won those conditions years ago, and it is not likely the conditions will be taken away. The only move likely to arise, and one which would be well taken, is a reduction of those hours. Anyhow their eight hours' day is absolutely secured, but if various Railway Commissioners had their own way I daresay they would not possess those hours very long.

The Minister for Works: That is unkind.

Mr. SWAN: I know the men I am talking about, and I have no scruples about saying what I think about them. I had to fight those men when I was hard at work in the department, but I took good care to give no chance to the boss,

or I would not have been there long. My thirteen years' association with the department was not because of the consideration of any Railway Commissioner or other officer. It was because they could not get away from the fact that they got good value for their money every time. That is why I remained in the service. I would not have been kept there if I had given half a chance to the officers of the department to get rid of me at the time when I took an active part in unionism; and when the present member for Murray was the Commissioner I would have gone out pretty quickly then if I had given the chance. I know that for a fact. I did not get a fair deal in the railway service, but I never squealed about it. No man has heard me say that before, but I did not get a fair deal; and the present member for Murray when Commissioner allowed me to be unfairly treated. A few years ago all the employees I have mentioned besides the tradesmen were on the same footing with regard to hours of duty. The Engine-drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Union moved in the direction of obtaining an industrial agreement with the Commissioner, and, possibly through getting at a soft spot on him, or more likely because they were a powerful organisation representing 99 per cent. of the men, they received a fair deal as to hours of duty—48 hours a week being fixed. Another strong organisation, so far as numbers are concerned, but not possessing the same percentage of employees as members of the organisation—and none recognised that better than the officers of the department—failed to get an agreement, and they had to approach the Arbitration Court. By virtue of the vigorous fight put up by the present member for Murray against those men in the Arbitration Court, they were tied down to 96 hours a fortnight instead of 48 hours a week. One cannot very well in the Railway Department apply the eight hours a day principle absolutely, but if there are officers with brains, they can work the department successfully on the 48 hours a week principle. Those men went to the Arbitration Court. I heard the member for Murray conduct the case, and know

the arguments he used, and the result of that case was as I have mentioned. At the expiration of the agreement with the Engine-drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Union Mr. Short with his usual cleverness, or one might even call it cunning, entered into an agreement with them for a further twelve months. He was honest enough to tell them that he did it with the object of getting the two agreements to expire at different periods.

The Premier: Was not that straightforward, and yet you said he was cunning?

Mr. SWAN: He was not so diplomatic as others might have been, but the fact of his moving to bring that about, shows his cunning. He knew well the position he would have to face if these two industrial agreements expired at the one time, consequently, he took steps to continue the old agreement, which embodied the 48 hours a week principle, for the Engine-drivers', Firemen's, and Cleaners' Union for another twelve months, and then he set to work to deal with the other employees. He put in some very fine work.

The Minister for Mines: You know it is fixed up now.

Mr. SWAN: I know that an attempt was made, but the Minister will know in a few days that it is not fixed up. When it came to discussing the hours of duty with the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees, who I suppose only have about 160 men engaged in the running department—and it is the only department where there is any difficulty in working 48 hours a week—they had a split. They failed to agree, and steps were taken in the House to discuss the matter with the Premier when a certain compromise was arrived at. In discussing this question Mr. Short pointed out that in one locomotive depot, at Wagin, it cost £1,500 a year to pay for time that was not worked, and for overtime that was worked by other employees to carry out this 48 hours principle. That was dealing with the organisation which then had 48 hours granted to it. Mr. Short used their position and the amount of money it cost to give them 48 hours, as an argument against giving it to another body of men who had half the number of men affected.

Even making due allowance for the figures to have been fair in other respects, it would have cost only half as much to give it to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees as it would to give it to the locomotive firemen, drivers, and cleaners. He asked the Premier whether the State could be fairly expected to pay that amount in order to apply this 48 hours a week principle, and the Premier, I think, said he did not consider it would be a fair proposition to ask the State to go to that extent to carry out this principle, and Mr. Short replied that when the other organisation's agreement expired they would have no chance of continuing their 48 hours a week. When the Premier had stated that it was a fair thing, the men expressed themselves as prepared to sign the agreement, especially after the Premier had been called in as arbiter. It seems to me that it amounts to playing the confidence trick with these men. The drivers, firemen, and cleaners got their agreement renewed for three years with the 48 hours a week principle maintained, and I am pleased to see that that was done. I know it was not done out of the large-heartedness of Mr. Short. They got that for the same reason that the working man usually gets a fair deal, namely, because of the strength of the organisation to which he belongs. That is my contention, and I care not what anyone says, and it can be proved any day of the week, that the only way in which the working man can get a square deal is through the power of the organisation to which he belongs, and good luck to him. The society, however, cannot help seeing now that a trick was played on them, and in what an unfair manner their position was placed before the Premier. I do not think that any fair-minded man can deny that there was a deliberate misrepresentation of facts on that occasion, and these men in every corner of the State are crying out against the unfairness of having to work under conditions which are different from those under which other employees work. They are now demanding redress, and they are going to have it by virtue of this action which is being taken in Parliament, or in some other way. I know that an offer has

been made by the Commissioner to alter the agreement to the extent, that at some stations, the more important stations, I understand—he would allow the 48 hours a week to operate, and at less important stations 54 hours a week. That is the condition of things that existed under the 1903 agreement. It is a condition of things that we fought very hard against at that time, but we failed to break down that 54 hours a week. There was some argument in those days for 54 hours a week in many of the country stations, but a great majority of those stations have increased in their work to such an extent owing to the rapid development of the State, that the men employed there are entitled to the eight hours a day just as they are at stations on suburban lines. If hon. members representing agricultural constituencies will look fairly at this question they will agree with me that the work at the country stations is now as hard as it is on the more important stations.

The Premier: What constitutes a country station in the generally accepted term?

Mr. SWAN: Under the old agreement there were practically only a dozen stations outside the metropolitan area which were not considered country stations; stations like Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Northam, Bunbury, and a few others. I ask the Premier himself, seeing that he travels backwards and forwards to Bunbury very frequently, whether he has not noticed that the work which is being carried on at these outside stations does not justify the men working for eight hours a day?

The Premier: What is Brunswick?

Mr. SWAN: Under the old definition Brunswick would be a country station.

The Premier: Not a junction?

Mr. SWAN: Yes, a junction, I know. Anyhow there are only a few stations which are not considered country stations for the purpose of the 54 hours a week. There are scores of stations in the State that have developed to such an extent that they are thoroughly entitled to be placed on the 48 hours a week system, and I am certain that nothing else but this 48 hours a week will now prevent trouble with the Amalgamated Society of Rail-

way Employees. I consider they are only submitting a fair proposition in asking for 48 hours a week, and I am satisfied they are determined they are not going to stop until they get it. I do not think I need labour that question any further. There are other employees in the various parts of the service who have not their hours defined at all; there are men such as linemen, I mean electrical linemen, whose hours vary according to the necessities of the work they are called at all times to perform. I know in their case it is not possible to define the hours they should work. The department have the right to call upon them to work 24 hours a day, and seven days a week if they like. In many cases they work very many hours over a fair day's work, and up to recently the department worked them 12 hours a day for every day of the week, Sunday included, and if they lost a day the next week it was stopped out of their pay. We had a hard fight to get that rectified. I believe the member for Murray had something to do with fixing it up. These men are in that position to-day that their hours of duty are not defined at all. I want to ask members what is wrong with this State if we cannot give a fair deal as the other States give to their employees? I know Ministers will trot out figures and make comparisons with the other States, but I have worked in the other States and I say that the adverse conditions existing in Western Australia do not find a place in any other State of the Commonwealth.

The Minister for Works: All round they are better off here.

Mr. SWAN: In some cases they are.

Mr. Johnson: They are paid time-and-a-half for Sunday work in Queensland.

The Premier: Night officers there get a minimum salary of £100 as against £140 in this State.

Mr. Johnson: I shall deal with that question.

Mr. SWAN: I am positively surprised at a fair minded man taking that view of the question.

The Premier: I only said they were better off here than they were in Queensland.

Mr. SWAN: It must be taken then that if they get fairly good treatment there, they get exceptionally good treatment here.

The Premier: You put up an argument that they are worse off here than in the other States, and I have given you an instance to show that they are not.

Mr. SWAN: There is no great credit due to us in not adopting a system like that.

The Premier: That is a queer argument.

Mr. SWAN: It is not a queer argument. The Premier claims that these men are fairly treated.

The Premier: I never claimed anything of the kind; I merely met your argument.

Mr. SWAN: Then you met it in a very illogical way. With regard to the men in this State as compared with the men in the other States, I would like to mention the case of the examiner. A majority of hon. members will not know what an examiner is. I may say that although he is not a recognised tradesman, his duties require almost as much knowledge as is required in any other calling in the railway service. There is no question about that. I think the Minister for Works would have some idea about the particular qualifications of an examiner. An examiner, although he does not serve his time in the trade, must have special knowledge to successfully carry out his work. He must be to some extent a fitter, to some extent a blacksmith, to a great extent a carriage builder, and almost master of half a dozen trades. He has to deal with practical issues such as hot boxes, handle the vacuum automatic brake as well as other portions of the brake gear, and in this great State of ours which is advancing according to Ministers by leaps and bounds we are paying examiners the magnificent "screw" of I think seven shillings and sixpence a day.

The Minister for Mines: Examiners?

Mr. SWAN: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Is not 8s. a day the minimum?

Mr. SWAN: The member for Bakkatta reminds me that 8s. a day is the minimum. It is recognised that men in this State should receive a higher rate of pay than those men working in the Eastern States.

The Minister for Mines: The leading examiner gets from 9s. to 10s. 6d., and the ordinary examiners from 8s. to 9s. 6d.

Mr. SWAN: Yes, that is the maximum, but it does not matter how men work and slave, when the end of the year comes round there are no increases. There are men in the position of examiners in this State who have been 8 and 10 years in the service and are still earning the magnificent wage of 8s. a day. Taken all round these men require quite as much skill as any tradesmen in the department and there is a great deal of responsibility on them for the safety of the travelling public. Year after year they work all hours, day and night, for 8s. a day. It is a comparatively dangerous calling and yet they are left on the minimum. No increases have been granted for years. The system of advancing from the minimum to the maximum is tolerably well recognised throughout railway services in all parts of the world, but in Western Australia for the last few years comparatively few increases have been given, and the principle has been laid down of adopting the minimum provided by the Arbitration Court. When the late Commissioner for Railways drove the society, or shall I say the society drove him, into the Arbitration Court it made no difference.

Mr. George: I "licked" them, that is all.

The Minister for Mines: What surprised me was that they did not go to the Minister.

Mr. SWAN: The men we then had in the State were always prepared to give a fair and square deal to their employees. I know a little about this for at the time in question I happened to be president of that organisation. The Minister for Railways smiles, as if he had a non-

opoly of the knowledge of the question. I happen to know a little and on what I know I am satisfied that we got a fairly good consideration from the Minister of the day, a consideration far better than we can get from the present Minister. From the time the Arbitration Court laid down the minimum wage the increases have practically been abandoned. It is only in the case of a favoured officer, or under very exceptional circumstances, that any increases are given, and I say this principle is absolutely unfair. I may give hon. members an idea of how these examiners of whom I am speaking are treated in the other States. The award in New South Wales sets out that for the first year an examiner shall receive 8s. a day. This makes it very definite. Nothing is left to chance. It is laid down that they must get their increases. In the second year the examiner is to have 8s. 6d. a day, and in the third year 9s. This is an award in New South Wales where they are not credited with paying high wages, but where they have at least a creditable railway system.

The Minister for Mines: You are quoting the highest wages paid in the East.

Mr. SWAN: Unfortunately for our reputation as a liberal State, they pay very much higher in New South Wales than we pay in Western Australia. Will the Minister say it is a fair thing that an examiner should be employed for 8 or 10 years without an increase, whilst we find an award in New South Wales which compels the department to pay examiners in the third year 9s. a day? How is the Minister going to explain that? Surely we can afford to pay our railway employees as well as the Eastern States pay theirs. I do not want hon. members to think I have touched on all the grievances of our railway employees; I could go on talking all night and still be trotting out legitimate grievances of our railway men. I am pleased to think the time has arrived when Parliament is prepared to do justice by the railway men. One of the worst treated bodies of men in the service is that of the shunters. I have asked for a return to be laid on the Table dealing with the number of acci-

dents that have occurred to these men during recent years, and I am satisfied that the return will be an eye-opener to hon. members when they find the number of these men killed and maimed annually in the carrying out of their duty. It is unquestionably the most dangerous calling inside or outside of the railway service. Unless you pick out a couple of the chemical works in the old country where it is practically a living death for the employees all the time you can find no employment where the same danger exists as in that of a shunter. What sort of treatment does the shunter get in the way of payment? These are the particular men for whom the Commissioner for Railways has such consideration, seeing that he was a shunter himself at one time. I am thinking he was not so big round the girth at that time. If you see a shunter about town you will not find him corpulent; he is more like a greyhound.

The Minister for Works: The Commissioner is not very corpulent, you know.

Mr. SWAN: Still he looks very well in health. I do not think his calling takes as much out of him as would that of a shunter. These shunters get 7s. 6d. per day for working all hours, many of them working 12 hours continually. The department works them over-time.

The Minister for Mines: They get paid for it.

Mr. SWAN: And any officer who realises the risk these men run when working overtime, and still allows them to work over-time, does not know his duty. If he recognises the risk then he cares nothing for the men's lives. It is of no use for the Minister to interject in that way. For their own safety these men should not be allowed to work more than 8 hours a day; they are compelled day after day to work 12 hours, and the Minister says they are paid for it. In many cases they are not paid for it; they perhaps go on at 8 o'clock in the evening and are kept working until 8 o'clock in the morning, and the next day they are booked off so many hours to cut out the overtime. The justice of their claim to overtime is not recognised. They are dog tired in the shunting yard—and it must be remem-

bered that a yard like that of Perth is absolutely dangerous in broad daylight under the best conditions. It is perhaps the most dangerous yard in the Commonwealth. Yet these men are working there for 7s. 6d. a day without any increase, and if they get in a little overtime they are obliged to cut it out. Is it any wonder that we find them chopped to pieces every now and again? Half a dozen of them are to be found at the Perth station alone with arms or legs off. What consideration is shown to these men? One other matter I must touch upon is the way in which the Railway Department treats its old men. If there is one thing more than another they have reason to be ashamed of, whether Minister, Commissioner, or any other responsible officer, it is the way in which they treat their old and faithful servants; and the lower these old servants are down the ladder the less consideration do they get. Then, presumably, hon. members are surprised at me and think I forget myself when I speak about the Commissioner as I have done. Who am I to criticise if I do not criticise him? I think the Minister is to some extent responsible, but I recognise that he is not in touch with all these details. For this reason I hold the Commissioner mainly responsible, and I will give it to him, here or outside, every time, just as I have given it to better Commissioners. We have men in the service too old to earn enough money to suit the Commissioner of Railways; we have one man whose age is 43. His length of service was 18 years, he has been a ganger 10 years. It will be readily understood that these men, in many instances, are not worked hard, but their occupation compels them to be out in all sorts of weather, and a man with a tendency to rheumatism will develop it. This man contracted rheumatism at Northam and asked for light employment, and for the time being he was given a job cleaning up the yard at Northam, but when the retrenchment scheme came on they fired him out. He was incapacitated in the service of the State, and yet they fired him out to starve; and it is wondered why we criticise the Commissioner.

Another case is that of a man named Smith, a repairer at Midland Junction, 55 years of age, and with 21 years' service. In consequence of some paralysis he was given weeding work at Midland Junction. He has an invalid wife and two children, one of whom is mentally afflicted and the other is 11 years of age. These men have given long and faithful service, and have never at any time been overpaid. I remember when I came to the State they were working nine hours a day for 7s. Of course they were in a worse position then than they are now. Instead of 12 days' holiday they got only six days. These men have worked under these conditions from 18 to 29 years, and now we fire them out because they are getting old and cannot do the same work as previously. I want to say a word about one Minister. He went down to Fremantle a week or so ago and practically charged the unionists with preventing these old men getting a living. He is absolutely incorrect, and the Minister must know it. Having had considerable experience in dealing with organisations that represent these men, I know we have often had applications made to us under the Arbitration Act for permission to allow these old men to work for a lower rate of pay.

The Minister for Mines: Did you say I made that statement recently?

Mr. SWAN: No, I am speaking about the Honorary Minister. He said that by refusing to allow these men to work under the arbitration award we practically forced them out of the service.

The Minister for Mines: Look at the uproar about employing men at 6s. 6d. a day at Midland Junction.

Mr. SWAN: Who made the uproar?

The Minister for Mines: Members opposite.

Mr. SWAN: That is one of the cases the Minister unearthed in his defence on the last occasion. When the Minister starts to talk about the workshops at Midland Junction, I know old men who are not paid as much as they should be, and I know men who are not old men who are not paid as much as they should be. However, the Honorary Minister told the public this. It was an excellent oppor-

tunity for him to have a slap at the Labour party and unionism generally. He said that owing to the action of the unions in refusing permission to work under the arbitration minimum the department were compelled to dismiss these men.

The Minister for Mines: You charged us with sweating.

Mr. SWAN: I challenge any Minister or any hon. member to show me one instance where any railway organisation refused permission for an old man to work below the minimum rate.

Mr. Heitmann: After long service they should not be asked to do so.

Mr. SWAN: I have argued that point previously. If we cannot afford to pay men decently who have given from 18 to 29 years' service under adverse conditions we should shut up shop. I believe in State-owned railways; no member in the House will say he does not support State-owned railways; but far better would it be to hand our railways over to private enterprise than to treat our employees like this. No private employer would treat his employees like this. I know men in the House who have had men employed under them for years and have not treated them like it. I do not believe the people of the State expect it, expect that we should throw out our old and tried servants in this way. It is time the Minister took action to stop it. These cases I have mentioned are not the only cases. There have been 15 old men thrown out throughout the service. The cases I have mentioned are only typical cases. What has the Minister to say to this? Is it giving the men a fair deal? Does not the Minister think 18 to 29 years' honest service entitles these men to some consideration in their old-age, or does he think we have the right from any standpoint to treat these men in this way and throw them out to starve? A wage of 7s. a day for many years and 8s. a day later on is not sufficient for them to build up anything on which to retire in old-age.

The Minister for Mines: What do you suggest?

Mr. SWAN: I say there is no trouble in finding them light employment. I can

point out jobs they can do well enough. There are many men throughout the service who are, perhaps, favourites with their immediate bosses, who are having a good time on certain jobs on which some of these old men might be employed.

Mr. Bath: The difficulty is the trouble has only risen in the last two years.

Mr. SWAN: It has only risen in the last two or three months. Previously the department made some attempt to find employment for them, but latterly they simply fire them out and make no provision at all for them.

Mr. Heitmann: What was the reason—retrenchment?

Mr. SWAN: I must not forget that point, it is rather important, and I hope hon. members will take notice of it. The railways employees have an appeal board constituted by Act of Parliament to which they can appeal against unfair decisions of the heads of their branches. The Act provides that an employee of 12 months' or longer service may appeal against a fine, a reduction in pay, or dismissal; that is as far as the Act goes. When it comes to dispensing with the services of these old men, in most cases they are told the time has arrived when they cannot carry out their duties as they should do, and they are practically dismissed for incompetency; but as soon as they attempt to take advantage of this tribunal, granted by Act of Parliament, to which they have every right of appeal—I speak of the appeal board—the department trots out a notice that they are not dispensing with the services of these old men because they cannot do the work, but that it is on account of retrenchment. How can Mr. Short expect me to listen in silence to him talking the twaddle I have heard recently about these cases while I have an opportunity of opening my mouth in the House? I am not going to do it. I shall try to place hon. members in possession of the facts every time. This is an absolutely deliberate attempt to rob the employees of the advantages of the tribunal given to them by Parliament. It is not the only instance; it is continually done. Not only in connection with the old men but in almost every case in which they dis-

pense with a man's services they do it on the plea of retrenchment, because the man has no right of appeal for dismissal because of retrenchment. It is no use the Commissioner of Railways, or the Minister, or anyone else telling me this is not the case. It is a deliberate scheme for getting behind the back of Parliament, and nothing else. There is no excuse for the plea of retrenchment. While men are put off on the plea of retrenchment, others are being put on every day. In many branches of the railway service to-day they are busier, I suppose, than they have been for years. I am pleased to see it. I am pleased that it appears we are going to have a prosperous year on the railways, and I think it only fair that the men who earn the money, the men who are the largest factors in bringing about the big credit balance at the end of the year, should get some share of it. I hope hon. members will make a special note of the way these old men are treated.

Mr. Jacoby: How can you provide for it?

Mr. SWAN: I guarantee to point out means where they can get employment at a lower rate of pay. It has been done time after time. But it does not matter what I say. If it comes to a division in the House on party lines on this question, I suppose every man on the Government side of the House will record his vote against the old men for the sake of his party. I am sick of this party business. I reckon it is up to us to give our employees a fair deal no matter to which party we belong. Are hon. members, because they happen to occupy seats on the Government side of the House, prepared to treat with contempt the requirements of the working people of the State? They will not keep those seats on the Government side of the House very long unless they wake up to the necessity for considering the desires of the working man. I can see many faults in the party system, but some responsibility rests on the shoulders of the men on the Government side of the House as well as on the shoulders of those on the Opposition side. It does not follow that

because members are not Labour members there is no responsibility resting on them to see the workers of the State get a fair deal, whether they are State employees or employed by private individuals. But particularly when they are State employees, is it not up to them to get a fair deal? I am of opinion that it is beyond all shadow of doubt that the time is very near at hand when the Ministerial benches will be occupied by those who now occupy the Opposition benches. So far as actual party considerations are concerned, I do not care a hang. What I do care for is that I do want to see the State get a fair deal and the working classes particularly. They have no chance of getting it from the present Government. There is one other little matter I want to refer to, to show how the Commissioner of Railways and the officers responsible for these things, do not seriously attempt to give fair consideration to these men, and do not realise the seriousness of the position, and do not earnestly try to set these palpable grievances right. In the Perth goodshed for the last 12 months or so we have had men of many years' service and capable of taking positions of responsibility, doing the work of goods checkers. In the classification of the late Commissioner it was laid down that the goods checkers should receive from 8s. 6d. to 9s. 6d. a day, so far as my memory serves me, and it was laid down at the same time that the goods porters should receive 8s. 6d. a day. Notwithstanding the fact that these men have occupied the position of goods checkers for years, they are being systematically drafted out of the positions of goods checkers into some other positions, where there is some excuse for reducing them in pay. Perhaps the minimum for the grade in which they are placed is less than that which they were receiving and they are reduced to it. Men who had hitherto been wheeling a barrow, and were classed as porters, in many cases being men of little service, had been put in the place of the checkers. This was definitely and deliberately done for the purpose of reducing the wages of the men.

Mr. George: Do they not get the wages of the position?

Mr. SWAN: That is not the question. If we have ten checkers in the Perth goods station who have been occupying the position for years at 9s. 6d. a day, is it fair for the department to say that on account of retrenchment those men must go back to the position of goods porters and receive 8s. 6d. a day? Although these men subsequently worked in the goods shed, when it was found necessary to appoint a checker a man was chosen from the ranks of the casual labourers, to whom the condition which was laid down in the arbitration award did not apply.

The Minister for Mines: The maximum wage for a checker is 9s.

Mr. SWAN: I know it has been altered. The matter of 6d. a day does not affect the principle. These men have been deliberately reduced from the position of checkers to goods porters and their wages reduced to 8s. 6d.—all that is bound to be paid under the award—on the plea of retrenchment, and casual employees are put into these responsible positions at 8s. a day, which is the minimum provided. The department used casual hands to fill the positions, for if permanent men were appointed they would have to receive 9s. a day. One man I know personally has given 29 years solid good service to the railways of this country. He occupied the position of a goods checker, or some such similar position, he may have been a gatekeeper, and was getting 9s. a day. He has reared nine children in the State, and has grown old in the service, and what are they doing to him? He has been reduced from the position he occupied, on the plea of retrenchment, to the position of goods porter in order to satisfy the vindictiveness of the man who is his immediate superior officer, the goods agent in Perth. That is the sole reason for his reduction. That old man is now pushing a barrow about all day after 29 years' service. He is reduced in his position and reduced in his wages.

Mr. George: Why not appeal against his reduction?

Mr. SWAN: In this man's case it is not so much the reduction in wages but it is the different work he is doing.

The Minister for Mines: Why do not you bring that matter before the Commissioner?

Mr. SWAN: Similar cases have been brought before him for years.

The Minister for Mines: Why do not you try and get the Commissioner to take action to relieve this man?

Mr. SWAN: I get so little consideration when I try to deal with a case that I am sick and tired of it. I have often tried to get grievances remedied, but have received no encouragement either in the office of the Commissioner or Minister.

The Minister for Mines: If you do not bring the case forward it cannot be dealt with.

Mr. SWAN: While I conceive it my duty to ventilate the grievances of railway employees, or any other workers, it is not my duty to wait on the Minister's doorstep with every tinpot grievance that may exist. These men are represented by a strong and sound organisation who are quite capable of putting forward their grievances, but this organisation have experienced similar treatment to many others, that is, that their complaints are treated in most cases with contempt. The old man to whom I referred gave evidence in a certain case, and, I suppose, because he told the truth and said something his superior officer did not like, he was shoved out of his light billet and now has to push a barrow from morning to night.

Mr. Jacoby: We have no chance of dealing with cases of that kind.

Mr. SWAN: I am dealing with the case of railway men generally, and I will not lose an opportunity of bringing forward matters of this kind. If members had an earnest desire to see that the railway employees were placed in a decent condition, opportunities would be found of dealing with such questions. The whole administration of the railways is unfair to the men, and the chief object of the Department is to get as much out of the men as they can and

give them as little as possible. The particular genius who presides over a part of the workshops at Midland Junction to which I referred, has an arrangement which is called a painting machine. A man has been engaged on that work for about two years, and, I believe, when working there he was getting 8s. 6d. a day. I would like members to understand that in order to prevent the man on the machine from poisoning himself by the fumes from the paint, there is a sort of respirator which the worker has to wear. I believe it would be possible to provide a respirator which would be efficient and practical, but to use the one provided at the workshops is impossible. The man who tried to use it found that no sooner did he put it on than it caused him to vomit. That man's health broke down after being at the work for some time. His health is now ruined, and, I think he is well on his way to the grave all through the carelessness of the department in failing to supply him with the proper means to protect himself from the poison in the paint. The Department persist in contending that his illness has not been caused by the paint. They disclaim any responsibility for the state of the man's health. It looks as if he will not live long, and that his wife and family will become a burden on the State. If ever a man had a claim on the department for consideration it is this man. He got so bad that he had to be taken off the machine, and the department not only gave him nothing for the months he was away sick, but immediately he was taken off the machine they reduced his wages to 8s. a day; that is the generous sort of consideration the workers get in the State railways. Another question which should be touched upon is that of boy labour. It is portion of the policy of the workshops to utilise boy labour wherever possible. I am one of those who believe that the Arbitration Court, with all their faults, have no desire to allow the system of boy labour to creep into the industry. There is no question, however, about the fact that boy labour is being largely introduced into the Midland workshops. In

that connection I asked some questions in Parliament recently with regard to the number of labourers employed in various capacities at the Midland shops, and as to the numbers of the adult and junior workers. A reply was given by the Minister. Subsequently a deputation from the various trades unions in Perth waited on the Chief Mechanical Engineer in connection with this matter, and the figures supplied to that deputation by the Chief Mechanical Engineer were very different from those which the Minister gave in his reply to my question, and showed that the latter were absolutely misleading. There was 50 per cent. of difference between the two lots of figures. That shows the value we can attach to the answers supplied to members in this House. I am satisfied that the figures of the Chief Mechanical Engineer were correct, and that those given me by the Minister were incorrect. Perhaps it is not considered necessary to give correct replies to questions, for brevity cuts a bigger figure with regard to questions than accuracy. Although I have dealt with this question in a rambling sort of way I hope I have made members realise, to some extent, the seriousness of the position as it now exists. I am satisfied that if this 48 hours a week is not granted to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees, and the payment of Sunday time to officers is not made, we are going to be up against a considerable industrial trouble in the very near future. It will be no use saying that this is caused by me or anyone else going around and working up an agitation, or that the trouble is due to the bad leaders of the men, as we are so often told, for it will be forced home, even on the Premier, that these men are taking the bit in their teeth and do not want officers to lead them or any member of Parliament to urge them to fight for their rights, but that they will stand shoulder to shoulder. I am satisfied that if they are not given their rights by Parliament, or action taken in that direction, they will take means to secure them, and I will be very pleased to do anything I can inside the House and

outside of it to assist them to get their rights.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): I second the motion.

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

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): The hon. member who introduced this motion stated that he was not aware that it was the usual practice to give notice or some intimation of the intention to submit to the House a matter of importance such as this motion is. I am quite willing to accept his explanation, but at the same time members know that it is a customary procedure to give notice, so that the matter may receive every consideration, even before it comes under the notice of the House. It is almost impossible from the floor of the House to come to an intelligent conclusion with regard to a subject such as this, because it is a difficult matter to deal with, and it is a difficult subject even at a conference where four or five men are assembled around the conference table, in the hope as far as possible, of arriving at a definite conclusion. The hon. member has spoken for almost two hours in connection with this matter, and he has dealt with a considerable amount of ancient history. The motion, so far as I can gather, deals with two points on which the Commissioner differs from the officers, namely, in connection with Sunday time for officers, and 48 hours a week for the other employees in what are known as country stations, as distinct from the stations in the metropolitan area and Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Northam, Albany, and certain other centres. As the hon. member has stated, he has had a considerable amount of experience in connection with the adjustment of these disputes. I too have had a fair amount of experience with regard to the settlement of industrial troubles, and also so far as troubles in connection with the Railway Department are concerned. I cannot for the life of me see that we can come to any definite conclusion on a debate of this nature. It would be difficult enough to come to a decision around a conference

table where the opportunity would occur of debating point by point. That however, is the only way that we can arrive at a definite conclusion on matters such as these. Dealing, first of all, with the question touched upon by the hon member in connection with the anomaly which he stated existed between the officers of the loco. department and the traffic department, the hon. member has pointed out that there is a certain amount of anomaly existing, so far as the two men on the engine at the head of the train receiving different treatment from the man at the rear of the train in the guard's van. This was recognised, to some extent, at the conference which was held between the Minister for Railways, three or four representatives of the amalgamated society, and the Commissioner in January of this year. At that time the traffic employees had a 96 hours' period—that is to say it was possible for the Commissioner to work those men 96 hours in one week, and they would have to stand down the next week. I recognised at that time it did not seem to be a fair proposition. At the same time I realised that possibly it was very difficult to make a roster so as to enable the Commissioner to employ those men the whole of the 48 hours' period, and as a result of the discussion a compromise was arrived at and a period of eight hours was allowed in which to adjust the roster. That is to say, under that agreement it was provided that if a man worked more than 56 hours in one week, he was paid overtime. Under the old arrangement until he worked 96 hours he was not entitled to any overtime. That was accepted as a compromise, but at the same time the Commissioner intimated that at the conclusion of the agreement, which was then existing with the loco. employees and which expired recently, he intended, if possible, to place them on the same footing—that is to say, he was going to endeavour to arrange that the loco. men should be put on the same mark as the traffic men. At the conference with the representatives of the loco. union, it was not found possible to make this alteration. They had been working under those conditions for two years, and

they contended that they were not prepared to make any alteration. As a result, the agreement, so far as time was concerned, was extended for another three years. Since then it has been pointed out that although no distinct understanding was given, it was, to a large extent, understood that if possible the same conditions would be brought into force at the expiration of this agreement. To give effect to that the Commissioner has intimated to the representatives of the association that he is prepared to reduce those periods by half—that is to say, he is to bring the 108 hours' period down to 54; and the 96 hours' period to 48, and certain other arrangements were effected in connection with the drivers, firemen and cleaners as the result of this new industrial agreement which will cost the country approximately some £2,300 per annum. I understand that these employees are satisfied with this proposition which has been made by the Commissioner.

Mr. Bolton: Did you say that you understood the amalgamated society were satisfied?

The PREMIER: I understand that as a result of this offer to bring the amalgamated society on lines approximately similar to the others, that arrangement is satisfactory.

Mr. Bolton: That is not so.

Mr. Johnson: They declined to accept it.

Mr. Horan: It is not right.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will have an opportunity of speaking later on. He is recognised as an out-door authority, not an authority in the House. A conference was held on the 23rd September between the Commissioner and certain representatives of the officers of the association, when certain matters were brought under notice. They were, first of all, that the hours of duty of stationmasters and night officers should be reduced. The question of Sunday time, officers having to perform porters' duties, officers having to forfeit recreation leave, long service leave, the question of officers having to vacate their residences on long service leave, the question of calculating from

the time of joining instead of from the time of the officers reaching £100 or £110 per annum. As a result of that conference the Commissioner wrote to the Traffic Manager as follows:—

"I enclose copy of notes from deputation of Railway Officers' Association which waited on me. I shall be glad if you will go into the question of the hours of duty of the stationmasters and officers in charge, and the question of the Sunday time. As mentioned on Thursday I would like you where practicable to reduce the hours of stationmasters where you are satisfied that the arrangements are satisfactory, and where there will be no additional expense to speak of. So far as Sunday time is concerned I am not agreeable to any monetary payment, but in view of the arrangements in the other States I should like you to consider the question as to whether some compensation can be made. I should be glad if you would also consider the question of hours of duty at bridge booking offices."

Now certain of these troubles had been adjusted and the Commissioner had notified the officers' association to that effect. Later on, on the 29th November, a letter as written to the Commissioner asking certain questions, as follows:—

"1. Has provision been made for the payments of automatic increases due to officers receiving less than £150 per annum for 1908 and 1909? 2. Are arrangements being made to reduce hours of duty of officers working up to 12 hours daily? 3. Do you intend to provide for payment in cash for work performed by the salaried staff on Sundays? 4. Is a reclassification of all positions on the salaried staff being prepared?"

I will give the Commissioner's reply. He wrote:—

"1. No. But the Commissioner understands that from the 1st July last those officers in receipt of less than £150 per annum will be paid the rate of salary that would have been paid to them had they received an increase last year. In other words, the in-

creases in the cases mentioned will be at the rate of £20 for the current year instead of £10 for last year and £10 for this year. 2, You must be aware that arrangements have been made to reduce the hours of duty, and in a number of cases effect has already been given and the hours of duty reduced. 3. No. 4. The work of reclassification of the salaried staff is in hand, one section is almost complete and others will be taken in hand as early as possible. In respect to the station-masters, officers in charge, and night officers, their positions are considered each year and the stations classified in accordance with the work performed."

Since then I have had an opportunity of discussing the question with, first of all, the leader of the Opposition and the Commissioner of Railways, and, later, with the members for Guildford, for North Perth, and for Balkatta. That was on Wednesday last. Unfortunately we were not able to finish the discussion, but I am of opinion that if we had been able to continue to the end possibly some little differences might have been adjusted.

Mr. Johnson: Whose fault was it that we did not continue?

The PREMIER: The time at our disposal was limited. We put in two or three hours. It is not possible to discuss a question like this without hearing both sides. When we hear the hon. member's side it is necessary to ascertain from the other side, that is, from the Commissioner of Railways, how it will affect the department. Of course it is a very simple thing for the Government or for the Commissioner of Railways to come down and say "Yes, we will accede to all the demands." It is a simple matter to make one's self popular. But we are custodians of the interests of the State as well as of the interests of the railway officers, and I endeavour to look at a proposition of this nature as if I was responsible for the management of a business, and to realise that the country expects that we shall safeguard the public interests as well as deal fairly and decently with the officers concerned. As

a matter of fact it is not as if any privileges had been curtailed, for since the first of February last considerable increases have been effected. As the result of the conference held in January of last year it is estimated that the cost of bringing porters up to the minimum wage, and labourers to 8s. a day, will entail an additional annual expenditure of £3,555, and in the Supplementary Estimates which we are bringing down, increments to officers whose salaries have been adjusted, and increments to cadets, are set down at £3,000.

Mr. Johnson: That is not increased expenditure.

The PREMIER: I am giving the actual increased expenditure. From 48 to 54 hours per week for traffic each week to stand alone—this came into effect on the 1st of January—£1,300. Increase to drivers, firemen, cleaners, etcetera, as a result of the new industrial agreement, £6,600. I am simply quoting these figures to let hon. members know that at least an attempt has been made to place the railway employee in a better position than he was in previously. The hon. member knows that in a matter of this kind where threats are used it is not usual to have the same effect as where delegates meet round a conference table and discuss the question and come to a conclusion.

Mr. Swan: No threats have been used.

The PREMIER: Why, we have been told that the service is in a state of revolt.

Mr. Heitmann: The Commissioner refused to meet them.

The PREMIER: The Commissioner is prepared to meet the officers and discuss any point they may bring forward.

Mr. Taylor: That is only a recent development.

The PREMIER: Well, this is a recent development, surely I am only mentioning this in order to point out how difficult it is to come to any conclusion here. To my mind the question might very well have been discussed on the Railway Estimates. As a matter of fact I understood from the member for Guildford last

night that failing any settlement being arrived at it was the intention to discuss the question fully on the Estimates. It would have been a much more appropriate time to discuss it than the present. I do not know that I can say anything further in connection with the matter except that I have endeavoured on all these occasions to adjust matters so that while the employees receive consideration, at the same time the interests of the community should be safeguarded. I maintain the end might have been better attained by other methods than by bringing the question up in the House, and at the same time giving an indication that if all the demands are not complied with drastic steps would be taken.

Mr. Swan: Do you think the case has ever been fairly placed before you?

The PREMIER: I know I could not gather from the hon. member in a speech a couple of hours long what the grievances were. Could he not have put those grievances before me in five minutes much more clearly than in the course of a long speech like that. He went from Dan to Beersheba, and he revived matters dealt with years ago. I am sure I could have followed the hon. member much more clearly if he had explained the matter in conference. However, that is the position. It seems to me it is impossible to discuss the thing on the floor of the House and expect members to express an opinion on a matter which would entail a considerable amount of argument on both sides. As far as I can gather, boiled down the two main points of difference are, in respect to the officers, payment of Sunday time, and, as I am informed by an hon. member, the question of granting eight hours in the country districts to the other members of the amalgamated association.

Mr. Johnson: Forty-eight hours.

The PREMIER: Forty-eight hours. The reason why they are discriminating between the officers at the central stations and the other centres is, I am informed, that in the case of smaller stations their time is difficult of adjustment owing to the fact that the employment

is intermittent, whereas on the other stations the men are employed pretty well all the day.

Mr. Bolton: That is a very poor argument. If the work is intermittent it should be easy to adjust the eight hours.

The PREMIER: A man working eight hours continuously is under greater hardship than another working nine hours a day where, perhaps, there is only one train a day.

Mr. Bolton: Do you think the porters work eight hours a day on a stretch?

The PREMIER: In some instances, yes.

Mr. Bolton: You are wrong; you ought to consult the Commissioner.

The PREMIER: That is an evidence of how difficult it is to come to a conclusion where there are experts on opposite sides. I can only say in conclusion that the Commissioner is prepared to meet these officers and I am prepared to further discuss the situation with the members who have taken up this matter, so that if possible we may arrive at some conclusion which, if it will not satisfy all the demands made by the employees, will at least go some distance in that direction, and at the same time protect the interests of the State.

Mr. JOHNSON (Guildford): I must say I am disappointed with the reply given by the Premier. The unsatisfactory nature of that reply will necessitate my endeavouring to lay before the House the various grievances under which these railway officers and other branches of the service have been suffering for some time past. I would like to point out that in a matter of this sort the Premier must leave it to those of us who are bringing the matter forward to present the case as we think best, and consequently he cannot expect us to limit the question to one or two points, unless there is a possibility of settling the dispute. But when we are compelled to fight it then we must fight it from every point of view, and detail to the House the whole of the grievances under which these railway servants are suffering. Had the Premier said he was prepared to meet us if we concentrated

all the matters into one and decided that if one grievance was remedied we would leave the other matters to the Commissioner to settle, I would be prepared to meet him; but I have time after time tried to settle this; I have known that it has been growing some time and it has reached its height to-day; and in order to avoid trouble to the country, and to prevent the necessity for these men going to those who are mightier than us in this question, I have endeavoured to lay the matter before members to prevent the people of the country settling it if we fail. It is not necessary for me to tell the sufferings that will be caused if the men have to take that drastic step. I do not wish to be misunderstood. Right through my meetings with these men I have successfully prevailed on them to place the whole matter before the Premier and leave it to him, and I have told them I was satisfied they would get a fair deal. The whole of them agreed to that course of action. They told me, and I told the Premier on their behalf, that if he would undertake to meet them with the Commissioner, and allow both sides to fight it out, and give his decision, the railway officers and the other men would be prepared—

The Premier: To sign an agreement on it?

Mr. JOHNSON: I told the Premier these men were just as prepared to accept the Premier's word as he expects to accept their's; and if they say they will accept his, I have just as much confidence in them as I would have in the Premier that they will no more go back on their word than he would on his. The Premier could not see his way clear to meet the Railway Officers' Association in conference. It is true he agreed that he would meet three members of the House, the members for Balkatta and North Perth and myself, with the Commissioner and the Minister for Railways, to discuss the situation; and, as the Premier pointed out, we met and discussed the situation, but I was surprised at the Premier's remark to-day, that time did not permit of our coming to a satisfactory settlement. Does the Premier forget that when we

arrived at a certain stage, namely, when we came to the main grievance, the Minister for Railways wrapped up his papers and stood on his feet, and walked out of the Premier's office and the Commissioner followed suit? If the Premier had suggested it should be postponed we would have been only too happy to meet him, but the facts are that we had arrived at a deadlock, we were unable to arrive at an agreement on the main point, and we were unable to take any course but the course we are adopting to-night. The Premier said it was unfair of the member for North Perth to introduce this motion without giving notice. In the ordinary course I would agree with the Premier in that contention. I believe it would be better for hon. members in ordinary matters to notify the Premier, but we had a bitter experience this session, and, as I said then by interjection, I would never agree to the Minister being notified when it was proposed to move the adjournment of the House. The member for Mt. Magnet did it and what did he get? I leave it to hon. members to take their memories back to that occasion, and they can arrive at their own conclusions. Now, to come to this matter, it will be said no doubt, and the Premier has said it to-night, that these men are working under exactly the same conditions practically—

The Premier: Better.

Mr. JOHNSON: Under the same conditions as they have been working for some time. I am not going to admit that they are, but I am prepared to say that, taking the matter generally, and speaking broadly, the conditions to-day are somewhat different from what they were five, six, or seven years ago; but this is due to the fact that five, six, or seven years ago these men had no organisation; and because they had no organisation they suffered at the expense of men that were completely organised in the railway service. I do not propose to go into detail to prove that contention at the present juncture, but I will prove it up to the hilt before I conclude my remarks.

The Premier: Did you say they suffered?

Mr. JOHNSON: They have suffered because of their want of organisation. Their requests have been flouted and they have been ignored by the Commissioner, ignored by the Minister, and ignored by Parliament. Time after time these men have appealed to the Commissioner and appealed to the Minister and appealed to Parliament for some redress of their grievances, and on every occasion their requests have been ignored, and this has been due to the fact that they have been disorganised, have not been working unanimously, or working as an organisation, but have been trying to get something like justice by taking individual action. Every year I have been in Parliament I have raised my voice on the Railway Estimates in requesting that some consideration be extended especially to the night officers employed in our railway service. I only emphasise this to show that, although they have suffered, they have not been suffering willingly, they have entered their protests wherever it was possible to enter them without having complete organisation: but I am happy tonight to say that these men are now completely organised; they have suffered long enough to realise that they get no consideration by individual action and that there is only one way of getting it, and that is by organisation, in speaking as one man. They found this because they found that the Locomotive Engine-drivers', Firemen and Cleaners' Association got all they asked from the Commissioner, because the Commissioner knew that the men who met him in conference were voicing the opinion of every man working in the railway service as a locomotive driver, firemen, or cleaner, and that to disregard the request of the deputation was to disregard the request of the whole of the men of the service. Knowing the strength of that organisation he conceded everything they desired; but he had previously met another organisation, the Traffic Branch, and he did not concede to them because he thought by a little bit of manoeuvring he could get these men to accept something that would influence the Locomotive Engine-drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association to follow their example and accept an alteration in

hours of labour; but the Locomotive Engine-drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association did not do so. I would emphasise the point already emphasised by the member for North Perth, that the Commissioner of Railways, when in conference he met these men with the Premier, knew they were not strongly organised as the Locomotive Engine-drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association were. Had they been strongly organised there would have been no 56 hours in that agreement, and there would have been no 7s. 6d. as a minimum wage. These men would have received what Parliament would have desired to be conceded to them, namely, 8s. a day and a 48-hours week. I emphasise this point to show that these men have suffered because of their want of organisation, not because they were satisfied with their lot, but because they were not strong enough to get their grievances remedied. Now they are organised their first act, absolutely constitutional, after strengthening their organisation, after meeting in the various branches and declaring exactly what their grievances were, was to approach the Commissioner of Railways. They were not readily met by the Commissioner. He was not as anxious to meet them on that occasion as the Premier points out he is anxious to meet them now. They had some difficulty in meeting the Commissioner, but they eventually met him on the 23rd September, and it is true the Commissioner remedied some grievances which they brought under his notice, but the grievances he remedied were very small in comparison with the other grievances he decided he could give no redress to. Although he did not give them a definite reply that he could not grant all they required, he said he would let them know later on. These men waited from the 23rd September until about the 14th October, and then they wrote to the Commissioner asking him to reply and let them know exactly what decision he had arrived at in connection with the grievances they had brought under his notice. I want hon. members to note this point. To the letter they wrote on the 14th October

they have never got an acknowledgment; the letter was absolutely and distinctly ignored by the Commissioner. Then they waited until the 29th November and they wrote stating that they wanted a reply, and it is true that they made that letter very pointed indeed. They gave the Commissioner to understand that they were not going to be trifled with and I give them every credit for doing so. Then the Commissioner replied—I was going to read the letter, but seeing the Premier has already read it I will not take up the time of the House, but he said that he had done some little to redress the grievances but there were various others he could not entertain. Those he could not entertain were the main grievances; those he had remedied were of little or no moment. What were the grievances? They were—1. Long hours of duty; 2, officers performing postal duties without remuneration; 3, payment for Sunday time; 4, remuneration of telegraphists, or the small pay received by those in the telegraph service of the Railway Department; 5. annual increments. I do not say these are exactly in the order in which they come, but, generally speaking, these were the five points on which there was a discussion. The greatest of these is undoubtedly the one I mentioned third, namely, payment for Sunday time, and I am prepared to admit on my own behalf, and I think I can speak on behalf of the officers in the railway service, that if they were paid for Sunday time, if Parliament conceded as the result of this motion that they were to be paid for Sunday time, they would be prepared to leave to the Commissioner and themselves the discussion on the other points of dispute. The main grievance they have is payment for Sunday time, and that is the point the Commissioner of Railways distinctly refused to entertain in any shape or form. Consequently it is the main grievance, and I ask hon. members to take it mainly into consideration while not forgetting the other grievances with which I shall deal and which I have already outlined. In connection with the demand for Sunday time, the wages members of two other organisations, namely the Locomotive Engine-

drivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association, and the Traffic Branch, get time and a half for Sunday work, and Sunday time stands by itself.

The Minister for Mines: That is recent.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is recent, but the fact remains that they have got it. They had it some time ago and it was taken from them. As a matter of fact the Premier has said that they have had it for seven years.

The Minister for Mines: It was taken from them by the Arbitration Court.

Mr. JOHNSON: No, it was taken from them by the Commissioner of Railways. However, they have it to-day. The members of the traffic department, for instance, the guards, porters, shunters and so on, right through, get time and a half for the hours they work on a Sunday, and the engine-drivers, firemen and cleaners get the same. I will give instances to show how wrong the system is. If a member of Parliament wants to take his wife out on Sunday, he goes to the ticket window to purchase a ticket, the man that sells him that ticket works on Sunday, and in some cases for 12 hours. That man is responsible for the cash, he is the most responsible man in connection with that ticket, but he gets no extra remuneration, no recognition in any shape or form for the work he does on Sunday, other than if he works every Sunday he receives extra holidays at the end of the year. After buying the ticket the member for Parliament goes to the barrier and hands it to the ticket collector, who snips it and sees it is dated, and for doing that duty the ticket collector gets time and a half, and Sunday time stands by itself. I will appeal to members' fairness on this matter. Is it right that the man who handles the cash, the man who accepts all the responsibility, should get no recognition for his Sunday labour, but that the man who simply collects the tickets should receive time and a half. I do not want it to be thought I do not wish the man who collects the ticket to get time and a half, for he undoubtedly should. No man should be called on to work on Sunday unless he gets time and a half. If I work on Sunday I get double time.

This shows the grievances that exist and how they cannot be tolerated under conditions similar to those I have outlined. Again, take the suburban area. The work on Sunday is heavier than during the week; every member will agree with that. There are the special Sunday flower trains and special excursion trains, there is increased traffic on Sundays and, consequently, increased labour. Speaking generally, the officer works harder on Sunday than on any other day of the week. It may be urged that this is an innovation, that we are asking for something that is unfair. It may be said that it is unfair to introduce this system of payment for Sunday time, but for the information of the House I will just tell members what is done in other parts of the world. I have in my possession a paper giving a report of the conditions under which railway servants work in Russia, and members will be surprised probably to hear that in that country the railway servant gets time and half for working on Sunday. I am not going to Russia for illustrations, however, for I will go to the mother land first. Here is a letter from the Railway Clerks' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, dated London, June, 16th 1909; several questions are dealt with, but on this the writer says—"Speaking generally, the allowances for Sunday pay are given on a minimum of half a day's pay for a total of not more than five hours, and when more than five hours' work is put in a day's pay is allowed."

The Premier: How many hours do they work?

Mr. JOHNSON: I am dealing with the question of payment, I will deal with the hours later on. Where more than five hours' work is put in a day's pay is allowed. The letter goes on—"This is given to all clerks who work on Sunday whether regularly or otherwise, provided of course, they go on duty by order of their superior officers and not to suit their own convenience to pull up work that has been allowed to get into arrears. The rates of pay for Sunday work are the same as for week-day work: that is to say, a clerk

whose regular wages are 30s. a week would have 5s. for a day's Sunday duty one-sixth of his week-day pay." That may startle members, but it is a fact that in Great Britain men get payment for Sunday work, and we are only asking for the same system to be recognised in Australia, with the difference that instead of getting the ordinary rate they should get time and a half, as paid to other servants in the Railway Department. I have a letter from Sydney, but evidently there was some understanding arrived at by the Commissioners' Conference which is held regularly, for the Commissioner of Railways there writes stating that requests of this description for information have to go through a superior officer instead of through an officer of an organisation. Then we find what exists in Wellington, New Zealand. The department there wrote in May last—"With reference to your letter of the 8th instant, as to the payment of officers for Sunday duty, I have the honour to inform you that when the staff are specially brought on in connection with the running of Sunday trains they are paid for the day at ordinary rates. In the case of a train starting its journey on a Saturday and not reaching its destination until Sunday, it is considered as an ordinary week-day train, and officers are not paid for the time worked on Sunday in connection with such train. The outdoor staff brought on for Sunday duty are paid at rate and a half." In New Zealand, therefore, the men are paid time and a half; that is the outdoor staff, while the clerks get the ordinary time.

The Minister for Mines: What about the night officers and station-masters?

Mr. JOHNSON: The payment of officers for Sunday duty, when the staff are specially put on in connection with the running of Sunday trains is at the ordinary rates, but the other branches are paid time and a half. I would like to make this point; the Premier states that the men are paid time and a half in Queensland, but that they get time and half because they receive less wages than the men receive in Western Australia. If that is a good argument I would point

to New Zealand, where the conditions are decidedly better than even in Queensland or in Western Australia, and where the men receive payment for Sunday time, while their minimum is higher than the minimum in Western Australia. It is no argument to say the men receive it in Brisbane because they get less than the rate existing here. Then as to Queensland. A letter from the Commissioner's office, dated May, 1909, states as follows :—"I am desirous to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 8th instant, asking if officers in this department are paid for any Sunday time worked, etcetera, and in reply to inform you that Sunday work (between midnight on Saturday and midnight on Sunday) is paid for at the rate of time and a half." The Victorian railway regulations contain the following regulation :—"Every officer who is regularly required to come on duty either on every Sunday, or on every alternate or third Sunday, other than in continuation of a shift beginning on Saturday, or in commencement of a shift terminating on Monday, shall be paid an allowance on the following basis for each Sunday so worked. Time worked, two hours or under, quarter of a day ; over two hours and not exceeding four hours, half a day ; over four hours and not exceeding six hours, three-quarters of a day ; over six hours, one day." Consequently in Victoria the payment of Sunday time is recognised to the officers of the service. The following letter was received from the Commissioner's office in Adelaide :—"No payment is made in respect of Sunday time worked by officers, but those who have to perform Sunday duty are allowed extra leave in consideration thereof when taking their annual holidays" so there they get special leave in recognition of Sunday work. As to South Australia, however, recently, owing to the action of the Officers Association, negotiations were opened with a view of getting payment for Sunday time exactly as pertains in the other parts of Australia. The following letter has been received from the General Manager's office, Tasmania :—"In reply to your letter of the 8th instant, officers working on Sundays are paid at the

following rates :—Maintenance staff, time and a half ; Traffic, wages : two or four hours, half a day ; upwards of four hours, one day. Salary : under two hours, quarter of a day ; two to four hours, half a day ; four to six hours, three quarters of a day ; over six hours, one day."

The PREMIER: What are they paid, 6s. a day ?

Mr. JOHNSON: If the Premier argues from that point of view he must accept the other argument that in countries with far better conditions than in Tasmania, New South Wales or Queensland, where they pay a higher minimum than is paid here, ordinary time is allowed to officers, and time and a half to the wages staff ; consequently it is no argument to say that because we are a State paying less wages that governs the situation in connection with the payment of Sunday time. I want members to realise that officers, in asking for payment for Sunday time, are making a legitimate request and are only asking to be placed on exactly the same footing as other workers in the railway service of Western Australia. They are asking that Western Australia should copy the example of other parts of Australasia and the old country. I would make this point, that on Sunday we are giving special fares to the general public for travelling in the suburban area. The railway fare on Sunday is exactly the same as the reduced fare on Saturday. The work done by the officers on Sunday is harder than that of other days of the week because of the reduced fare. If we called upon the public to pay the ordinary rate on Sunday the same as they pay on Monday I find from figures supplied to me, and I can vouch for their correctness, that the revenue would be increased from £2,000 to £2,500 a year. If the officers were paid for working on Sunday in connection with that service, it would only mean an increased expenditure of from £800 to £1,000 a year.

The Premier: Does not the Sunday rate apply every Saturday afternoon ?

Mr. JOHNSON: Yes ; there is a special rate on Sunday.

The Premier: Will you not be inflicting a hardship on those who want to take their families away if you increase the rate on Sunday?

Mr. JOHNSON: Do the public expect that they shall get a special condition at the expense of the unfortunate officers employed on Sunday? I say without hesitation that they do not; they do not want the railway service to be run so cheaply that the officers cannot receive that consideration which is absolutely their due. The point I want to make is that the public do not expect this, and consequently they would be surprised to hear that they get these reduced rates at the expense of the poor unfortunate railway servants. I will leave that point, but before leaving it I cannot help appealing again to members to take the matter into consideration in connection with this debate. The next question I wish to deal with is that of the long hours of duty. In mostly all country stations the officers work 12 hours a day, and I want to ask members whether they think it is fair that any man in this country should be called upon to work 12 hours every day, Saturday and Sunday included. The only day these officers do not work is the day on which they are away on their annual leave. It is true that there are some stations where only nine hours are worked, but I would point out, in order to bring it close home, that stations like East Perth, West Perth, Claremont, Cottesloe, Bellevue, and stations on the South-Western line as far as Armadale, including Armadale, work 12 hours a day, seven days a week. I want to appeal to hon. members and ask whether this is a fair thing. Is it fair that one section of the railway service should work 48 hours a week, or eight hours a day, and another section of officers, who take a great responsibility should be called upon to work 12 hours. I venture to assert that before this debate is concluded hon. members on both sides of the House will express the opinion that the Commissioner of Railways should at the earliest date endeavour to reduce the hours of these unfortunate

officers who are working seven days a week.

Mr. Davies: What holidays are they allowed each year?

The Minister for Mines: Fifteen days every half year.

Mr. JOHNSON: There is one thing that I do object to in connection with the debate of this description. It will be remembered that I read the whole of the correspondence in connection with the time worked on Sunday. I did not quote those matters to suit my argument but we find the Ministers always quoting the maximum given to officers in the railway service. And when the Minister stated what he did just now by way of interjection, he knew well that he was telling half the truth, and half the truth is a bigger lie than no truth at all.

The Minister for Mines: Mr. Speaker I ask that that statement be withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw that statement.

Mr. BATH: It is just as well, Mr. Speaker, before the hon. member is called upon to withdraw that statement that the House should be absolutely certain that the statement is out of order. The member for Guildford said that it was half the truth, and I desire to know whether a statement that it is half the truth is out of order before the hon. member is called upon to withdraw it.

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not want to intervene, but the hon. member said that half the truth was a bigger lie than no truth at all. The word "lie" is not Parliamentary, and I say the hon. member must withdraw that expression.

Mr. BATH: I rise to a point of order. The statement which the member for Guildford made that half the truth is worse than no truth at all is a well-known proverb which is contained in half-a-dozen books in the library, and any hon. member should be allowed to make this statement without being called to order. I do object to the demand being made that the hon. member should withdraw this expression before the House can be assured that it is out of order. It is a statement, Mr. Speaker I am prepared to make myself every

day; it is necessary to make it now and every day in the future.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Guildford might allow me to explain. Somebody interjected when the hon. member was talking about the officers being compelled to work seven days a week, and asked what allowance they got by way of holidays. I replied that they received 15 days every half year. The hon. member knows that this statement is correct, and that there is no intention to deceive the House in any shape or form.

MR. SPEAKER: I must insist upon a withdrawal of the word "lie," which is un-Parliamentary. There can be no question about that. It is not allowed in any House of Parliament. The hon. member may have intended a different meaning when he said that half the truth was worse than a whole lie, but exception was taken to it by the Minister for Mines, who regarded it as offensive, and I must ask that it be withdrawn.

MR. WALKER: I would point out that this quotation is a recognised classical one.

MR. SPEAKER: I understand the manner in which the expression was used, but the Minister took exception to it, regarding it as offensive, and I have no alternative but to ask the hon. member to withdraw it. The Minister took exception to the word, and I am bound to protect him.

MR. BATH: I think there should be an assurance that the Minister is right in taking offence at a mere quotation.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: He exceeded the quotation.

MR. BATH: I hope the Honorary Minister will cease snarling at me across the Chamber, I am not talking to him, I am talking to Mr. Speaker. I am just asking whether anyone can demand a withdrawal, and whether the withdrawal is to be conceded if there is no right to ask for the withdrawal of a statement which an hon. member should be allowed to make. The quotation the hon. member used is heard every day, and as I have said, it appears in half a dozen works which we have in our library; and I am prepared here now, and at any time I may think fit, to use it myself.

MR. SPEAKER: If the Minister is satisfied that the word was not offensively used I shall have nothing further to say in the matter. But I would point out that I must protect the Minister just as I would protect the member for Guildford if he took offence at anything any member said. I make no exception whatever in this House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: I should like your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether anything in the nature of a quotation is in order in this House. Some hon. members seem to think that if words which are used happen to be quotations, therefore, they are in order.

MR. SPEAKER: Not by any means. Many quotations are used, and used offensively and in quite a different manner. I would not have called upon the hon. member to withdraw if it had not been for the fact that the Minister felt himself aggrieved at the words which were used. If the Minister considers he has been offended the words must be withdrawn.

MR. JOHNSON: I desire to get on with my speech. It is true that I intended to make a quotation, and I did not think I was out of order. But if the hon. member objects I have no desire to insist upon it. I want to say that if the Minister desired to quote the holidays he should have quoted the whole of them. I would ask the Minister not to be rude enough to interject. He had no right to interrupt me when I was speaking.

THE PREMIER: We will note that for future reference.

MR. JOHNSON: If he desires to follow me and outline the holidays given to the officers, well, then, I trust he will quote the whole of the holidays and not only a portion of them, as he did by way of a rude interjection. I pointed out that these officers he refers to work 49 Sundays in the year, and on those Sundays they work 12 hours, and it is true, working 49 Sundays, that they get an additional 12 days holiday at the end of the year. I would make it clear by pointing out that very Government servant receives 12 days holidays in the year. but because these men

work all these Sundays they get an additional 12 days, or in all 24 days holiday in the year. There are other officers who only receive six days holidays in addition to the annual holiday given to other public servants. The Minister should have explained the whole matter, or waited until he was ready to speak in order to make that explanation. I do not desire to go into the question of holidays, because, after all, suppose they did get 12 days holiday for 49 Sundays work, I say it is a reflection on the management of the railways, and a reflection on the Government which permits that kind of recognition to be given to men who have to work 49 Sundays in the year. I am prepared to admit, as the Premier pointed out, that since the deputation of the 23rd September waited on the Commissioner, he has made some alteration, but I am not prepared to admit that he made all the alterations which the Premier would try to lead the House to believe; but he made some, and some were legitimate; he closed up the stations on some of the suburban areas for a given period during the night. Previously the officers were not required at these stations, but the Commissioner of Railways compelled them to stay there even though they were not required, but after the deputation waited upon him, knowing well they were not required there, he allowed them to go home and sleep instead of staying behind to count their fingers on the railway station. That is the alteration he gives them, and for doing that he expects special consideration. If he had stopped at that he would have received more recognition at my hands. Some may blame the Chief Traffic Manager, because the Premier read a letter in which the Commissioner drew the attention of the Chief Traffic Manager to the grievances, and requested him to remedy these grievances provided they did not incur increased expenditure.

The Minister for Mines: That is not quite correct.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is correct. The words used are, "no additional expenditure" or "no additional expense." I took the whole of the quotation when the

Premier was reading it; and the fact remains that the Chief Traffic Manager tried to remedy these grievances, but at the same time he had to do it without increasing the expenditure. As I say, if the Commissioner stopped when he reduced the hours by closing stations, I would have given him more credit. But what did he do? Take two stations. At the North Fremantle station the officer there was working 12 hours. There was a booking clerk there who worked day shift to deal with the booking. The Commissioner, after the deputation, reduced the hours of the stationmasters, but brought that poor unfortunate booking clerk on and increased his hours to make up for it. In other words, the Commissioner was miserable enough to give a concession to one officer at the expense of another unfortunate. Take Guildford, he did exactly the same thing there, and at the conference we had with the Premier he denied the statement I made that these booking clerks' hours had been increased. I repeat the statement again to-night that although he reduced the hours of stationmasters he increased the hours of booking clerks; and not only did he increase their hours, but he called upon them to do night duty, or to work from one o'clock in the afternoon till 10 o'clock at night, instead of working day shift on shorter hours as they had previously done. Then the Commissioner claims that he has not taken anything away from the officers of the railway service. This was emphasised by the Premier. I stated that I would disagree with that at a later stage. I propose now to say that, to a certain extent, there is some truth in the statements of the Commissioner that he has not altered their conditions, that is, that he has not reduced their wages or increased their hours from what they were some years ago. He has been in the habit—as a matter of fact it is the recognised policy of the present Commissioner, to transfer officers in such a way that they accept a more responsible office at a reduced salary. For instance, the stationmaster at Greenbushes was receiving £180 per annum. The Commissioner did not reduce the salary of that officer, but he transferred him to Collie.

Collie had been paid previously at £200 per annum. This officer took over the increased responsibility, took a greater burden, but he did not get compensation for it. Is that not equal to a reduction in wages? This Greenbushes stationmaster is transferred to Collie, and the Commissioner makes £20 on the deal at the expense of the officer. Another officer goes to Greenbushes and takes over the responsibility of Greenbushes at £160 per annum; here is another £20 in the pocket of the Commissioner. Morgans was paid previously at the rate of £170 per annum, but it was reduced by transfer to £150 per annum. Kamballie was paid at £180 per annum, and was reduced by transfer to £150 per annum. So, too, with Southern Cross, where the previous officer received £180 per annum, and his successor was paid £150 per annum.

Mr. Heitmann: The worst form of sweating.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is. And you will remember, Sir, the action taken by the House when the House Committee adopted similar tactics to respect to the messengers. We laid it down clearly that a system of that description was a system of sweating, and you agreed that they should be reinstated—that those officers who had taken increased responsibility should be paid the salary attached to that responsibility. Mr. Commissioner Short has adopted the same tactics, and I will ask hon. members to say exactly the same to-night in connection with railway officers as they said in connection with the messengers attached to this Chamber. But that is not all, for we find that officers in other branches of the service have been treated similarly. Take the clerk in charge of live stock transit; his salary at one time was £190, and for doing the duty another officer is paid at the magnificent rate of £130. In that deal the Commissioner makes £60 at the expense of the officer. Yet he claims, and the Premier endorses it, that he has not reduced salaries. I would point out to hon. members interested as producers of live stock, the dissatisfaction that exists to-day in connection with the transit of live stock, and I would ask them can they say that a large amount of this

is not due to the retrenchment of and poor salaries paid to officers in that department? But there would not be so much harm done providing the officers attached to the offices were the same as were hitherto attached when the salary was £190. But not only was the officer replaced by another who was only paid £130, but the actual staff of that particular office was reduced at the same time. Is that not sweating? Can officers be expected to continue working under that system? Let hon. members put themselves in that officer's place, and take the position at £130, knowing that the previous officer had been receiving £190. I ask the member for Swan what would he say? He would not work very long under those conditions. I will appeal to every other hon. member. I want hon. members to apply these conditions to themselves, and ask themselves as men would they tolerate it? And if they say they would not, I want them to say that these men shall not be called upon to work under these conditions any longer. One could go on and give further examples, but I do not propose to take up the time of the House. It is true there are worse instances than those I have already given. The Fremantle goods clerk is getting £110 in a position the previous occupant of which was paid £170.

Mr. Angwin: There is another being paid £70 whose predecessor was paid £140.

Mr. JOHNSON: This is the new system introduced by Mr. Short. It was not acted upon by the late Commissioner. I again ask hon. members whether they can expect these officers to work through the Christmas season under these conditions when they will be called upon to work all the hours of the clock to cope with the increased traffic? It is bad enough under normal conditions, but with the stress of the Christmas traffic they have to sacrifice everything in the interest of the Railway Department; and by way of recompense accept a reduction in salary in comparison with the responsibilities they undertake. Would I not then be justified in calling upon these men to go to a higher tribunal and appeal to the

people of the State to protect them against a Parliament, if we tolerated that sort of thing, and against the Commissioner who would introduce it? I could also quote many anomalies that exist in connection with the payment of various officers. It will be said there is a reclassification proposed, but in connection with this I would point out that the reclassification is to be made principally by the very gentleman who has been guilty of introducing this system I have referred to. In connection with that classification the officers very rightly requested that they should be given representation on the classification board. This was distinctly refused by the Commissioner. Then they said, "If you are going to classify us, give us the right to appeal, just as Parliament has given the right of appeal under circumstances to the wages staff." Now what did the Commissioner reply? Here is the reply—

"I am directed to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 17th instant relative to appeals in connection with the reclassification of the salaried staff, and to inform you in reply that the Commissioner is not prepared to delegate his functions to an outside board. Any appeal from the decision of the classification board will be dealt with by the Commissioner himself, and his decision will be final."

I ask hon. members whether they desire that these officers should be denied that which has been given to another branch?

Mr. George: Is the Commissioner exceeding his statutory powers?

Mr. JOHNSON: No; not other than this: if he is guilty of doing an injustice to his officers we, as his employers, are justified in taking him to task and outlining the policy we desire him to pursue. But this Parliament, or another Parliament composed largely of the same members, outlined in the Railway Act that they expected the railway servants to have a right of appeal to an independent board.

Mr. George: If he is not exceeding his statutory powers why not have an amendment of the Act?

Mr. JOHNSON: If the hon. member had allowed me to complete my sentence,

he would have found that the very point I was going to make. Parliament has outlined that an appeal board should be constituted for the wages staff. The fact of Parliament having outlined that an appeal board should be constituted, and should be an impartial board, should be a clear indication to the Commissioner that Parliament desires that to be done instead of limiting it to the wages staff. I ask the member for Murray would he not have taken that as a direction not to have an appeal board for one section and deny it to the other?

[Mr. Dalziel took the Chair.]

The Minister for Mines: They are for different purposes.

Mr. JOHNSON: Not at all. One appeal board is against injustice of all description, and this appeal board is against any classification which might not be fair. I will ask hon. members to remember this point and to realise that it is an important one, because the Minister will state that a reclassification is in progress to-day. What is the use of reclassifications if there is not to be any appeal from the Commissioner who has been guilty of these things I have outlined to-night? To show that a reclassification is necessary one has only to quote a few of the salaries.

Mr. George: They have the right of appeal.

Mr. JOHNSON: To whom?

Mr. George: The appeal board.

Mr. JOHNSON: No; "Any appeal from the decision of the classification board will be dealt with by the Commissioner himself, and his decision will be final." There is no getting away from that. I am glad to see that the member for Murray realises that this is an injustice, and I trust he will speak on the matter. But I was going to point out anomalies that exist, and these anomalies only go to help to make the conditions more intolerable so far as the officers are concerned. For instance, take the officer in Perth dealing solely with passenger traffic. The night station-master gets £200 a year, whereas in Kalgoorlie, where the night officer not only takes over the duties of

the station-master and deals with passengers and goods, but also takes the responsibility of the District Superintendent while the latter is away, because that gentleman is only on duty during the day time, we find the night officer gets only £190 a year, although taking responsibilities of this sort and working on the goldfields also. The man in Perth is not getting too much, but the man in Kalgoorlie is sweated in being worked at that wage, and under those conditions. Then we come to Northam. I make this point for the special edification of the member for Northam. Northam is an important station, and the night officer gets the magnificent sum of £160 per annum, while, in comparison, the sub-locomotive foreman, the officer second in command, and not taking altogether the responsibility of the night officer, gets £250 to £300 per annum. It shows it is absolutely essential that reclassification should be made, and I want hon. members to outline to the Commissioner of Railways that he has not to take into consideration the general state of the finances, but that he has to take into consideration whether the services rendered by these officers justify him in increasing their salaries, and I feel sure that the House will say that they do not expect these officers to work under these conditions at the wages paid, in other words, that when the reclassification is made it will be based on the highest salary and not on the lowest. There are one or two other matters I must touch on, and one of the principal ones is the work performed by the officers on behalf of the Commonwealth, in other words the officers doing postal work. This increased duty has recently been put upon their shoulders, and because they do the work the Government of the day receive some compensation from the Commonwealth, but these officers are not getting a penny-piece for the increased responsibility or increased work they are doing. I want to ask whether hon. members think it is fair that these officers who have received no increase of salaries for years, who for years have been working under unfair conditions, should be called upon to do this extra duty and not receive some

percentage of the amount the Commonwealth pay the Government because they perform that duty. When the Commissioner places upon the shoulders of these officers this duty he does something distinctly unfair unless he compensates them for the work they perform. I want now to refer to the payment made to the telegraphists employed in our railway system. We find in comparison with the telegraphists employed in the Post and Telegraph Department officers are getting from £30 to £130 less than is paid by the Commonwealth for similar work. The work is exactly the same, and the telegraphists in the Railway Department are competent men. It has been urged that these men are ordinary porters, that they were juniors in the railway service and were educated by the Commissioner of Railways in this particular work. I am prepared to admit there are some who have learned the telegraphic work in the Railway Department of the State, but the major portion of them are competent officers, some having been in post and telegraph work in other States, and others having been in the railway service of other States. They were competent officers before they came to Western Australia, yet we find they are receiving only from £120 to £130 per annum. The minimum paid by the Post and Telegraph Department of the Commonwealth is £160 per annum, and the salary goes on by different grades until it is possible after some years of service for a telegraphist to reach a salary of £280 per annum; yet our officers are called upon to do similar work at £130 per annum and be content. Is it fair to ask these officers to continue working under these conditions without a word of protest; or if they fail to get redress can we wonder at their giving up the work or making up their minds that they will go out and work in the agricultural districts rather than work under these conditions for the Railway Department of this State? Now I want to touch on a matter that I know will appeal to a number of hon. members in the House, and that is the payment of the annual increments. The Premier tried to get some little credit for the Commissioner of Railways because the Commissioner had

decided that he would pay £20 this year where an officer did not get his ordinary £10 last year. In other words an officer on £100 a year should last year have received £110, but the Government and the Commissioner failed or neglected to carry out their contract, and on protest being made it was decided to increase the salary to £120 this year; and the Government say they are giving the £120 the officer would be entitled to this year, and ask what the officer is growling about. He growls that he has lost his £10 increase for last year, that instead of receiving £20 this year he should also have received the £10 they robbed him of illegally last year. The regulation says distinctly that the annual increments shall be at the rate of £10 per annum for officers with salaries between £100 and £150 per annum. In other words an officer at £100 in one year, next year will receive £110 and so on until he gets his £150; but the Government last year decided the officer would not receive that £10 although the regulation distinctly laid it down he was to receive it. The regulation is the law of the land, so the law of the land decided or promised that these men should receive that £10. They did not receive it, consequently when they did not get what the law of the land said they were entitled to, it was taken from them, and when it was taken from them it justifies me in saying they were robbed. The Government in reply to questions asked have led us to believe the regulation made a proviso. It did make a proviso; the proviso was that if the exigencies of the Railway Department's finances demanded it there should be a suspension of the classification. But the exigencies of the Railway Department's finances did not demand it. There was a profit of £128,000 in the year the £10 was denied these junior officers, and the next year there was a profit of £156,000, so the exigencies of the Railway Department's finances did not justify the Government in denying these annual increases. I am of opinion that even this year, these increases would not have been paid had the Commissioner not found that these officers were gradually but surely all leaving the department.

I have it on the highest authority that no less than ten officers have left the chief accountant's office and found employment in different commercial houses, and in the banks of Perth, and that every one of them has received in salary from £25 to £45 per annum more than he was receiving in the Railway Department. Because these officers, specially trained under the chief accountant, experts in their particular line, were leaving at such a rate the Commissioner became alarmed that the work in the chief accountant's office would get in arrears, and that the chief accountant would be unable to cope with the work, and the Commissioner found he would have to do something and he decided to reinstate the annual increments, but all the same he failed to give them the £10 he took from them last year. I want to ask if the exigencies of the department's finances demanded that the junior officers should not receive their annual increments how it was that the senior officers, or highly paid officers, received the increases? Why were the junior officers penalised and the senior officers not? We find in the 1908-9 classification some officers received as high as £75 increases. On the one hand officers receiving over £500 a year received increases, while the poor unfortunate junior getting only £100 a year was denied an increase; yet we are told the exigencies of the Railway Department's finances demanded this suspension. I could give a list of the officers, the highly paid ones, who received increases in salary while the juniors were denied their increases. I do not desire to go right through the list, but I do want hon. members to realise there was something distinctly unfair in connection with the stoppage of these annual increments; and when the officers say they are not going to tolerate it any longer, that they are not going to put up with this sort of treatment, and that they are not going to be denied while the big men get the increases, they are to be encouraged in taking up an attitude of this description. We do not want officers who will be servile enough to tolerate treatment of that description.

Mr. Hudson: Absolute favouritism.

Mr. JOHNSON : It is, and it is making men absolutely servile. The class of man that would tolerate that is not the class of man we want in the railway service. The best men we can get to work for us are the men who want full wages, and want their conditions absolutely fair every time. If we get men who will accept any wages and who will cringe and crawl to us, my advice is get rid of them as soon as we can. They are not men at all. Consequently when we see these officers put their feet down and say, "We will not tolerate it," they should go up in our estimation, and we can say at least we have men in the Railway Department who are not crawlers and who will not tolerate an injustice year after year. With regard to the increases, I can mention eight or nine cases where they have been granted, but I do not desire to go any further into that question. As to the officers' grievances, I desire to sum up by saying that if the Premier will promise, or if this House will say that they will pay the officers time and a half for Sundays, the same as the other officers, and will say that the officers have a right of appeal to a fair impartial board against the classification, I am prepared to state on behalf of the officers that they will allow the other grievances to be remedied by the Commissioner of Railways. I want to point out that if the department pay time and a half to these officers it is an absolute certainty that not one-half of the men will be called upon to work on Sunday. They are brought to work now because there is no remuneration. The department have to pay them just the same whether they are with their families on Sunday or whether they are working in the railway service, and for that reason the Commissioner brings them to work. He has been guilty again of doing something distinctly unfair to the officers in connection with this matter. For instance, under the industrial agreement, porters and signalmen, who are employed on Sundays, are paid time and a half. Until quite recently at various stations the station master had the assistance of a porter, but the Commissioner of Railways, in order to bring about economies, recently took the por-

ters off, and thus saved the time and a half, and the result was that the station master was called upon to do all the work with no increased remuneration. One can find station masters cleaning and lighting lamps, and doing porters' work, on suburban and other stations on Sundays, where previously a porter did the work. The porter is getting out of the work altogether because his Sunday time is to stand by itself, and be paid for at the rate of time and a half. Exactly the same will take place when the station master is paid time and a half; he will not be called upon to work. Reductions will be made in places where there is no work for the station master but, in the past, because he was not called upon to pay that station master the Commissioner kept him there. They complained about the long hours, so the Commissioner, in order to gain credit, said he would not want these station masters, who might as well go home. If the Commissioner has to pay time and a half he will go further, and it will be found that in the large majority of cases Sunday time for station masters will be reduced to a minimum instead of being, as at present, at a maximum. I do not want the House to be led away by any statement the Minister might make when replying, that to pay time and a half will cause the expenditure of thousands of pounds. The Commissioner knows full well that if he has to pay time and a half he will not work the men. When the signalmen recently made the same request it was exactly the same line of objection that was raised. The Arbitration Court instructed the Commissioner to pay time and a half, and what happened? Two-thirds, or anyhow a great proportion, of the signal cabins, which had been kept open on Sundays along the suburban lines were immediately closed; they were not wanted, but while the men were compelled to work for nothing they were kept open; as soon as the department had to pay time and a half the cabins were closed. The same thing will be claimed to-night but that is distinctly unfair. If the time and a half is paid for Sundays the whole trouble can be settled. When we are speaking of pay-

ment for Sunday time we are not asking for payment for those stations where a train or two go through, that is in the country districts. We want the stations classified, and where it is just as well for an officer to sit in a station as to sit under a tree listening to the birds twittering it is not expected that that officer should be paid time and a half. All that is asked for in connection with these stations is that they shall be classified and that the officers in the outlying districts will continue as to-day, but that they shall receive more annual leave than they obtain now. They do not request to be paid extra, but where a man works as hard on Sunday as on a week-day, or even harder, that man should be paid time and a half; that is a distinctly fair request and if it is conceded by the House this state of discontent will cease to exist. If members say the Commissioner shall pay time and a half on Sunday, and guarantee that a fair appeal board will be constituted if the classification is not a fair one, the rest of the matters can be settled between the officers' association and the Commissioner. I desire nothing more. One gets a little bit tired of speaking, but I cannot sit down without referring to the other section of the railway service where great discontent exists, that is the traffic, and I want it understood that the men in that association are as much dissatisfied as those in the officers' association. They are equally as determined that they will not suffer under different conditions from those granted to other sections of the same service. I am not going into a lot of detail, although I could give various instances of discontent in connection with the traffic branch, but I want to speak broadly and say that if the Traffic Association received from the Government, or from the Commissioner, exactly the same conditions as are granted to the Engine-drivers, Firemen's and Cleaners' Association, we are prepared to leave the rest of their grievances to the association and to the Commissioner to remedy. There are various grievances which are of sufficient magnitude even to justify a debate of this description. I want to emphasise this: if this House

say they will pay time and a half to those officers who work on Sundays the same as those in other sections of the service, and give them a fair appeal board against an unfair classification, if they grant the traffic branch exactly the same working conditions, as far as hours are concerned, as were granted in the agreement with the Engine Drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Association, then we will all have a merry Christmas. Grant these requests and I am in a position to guarantee that the railway service will go along merrily and that there will be no more dissatisfaction so far as this House is concerned. We can leave the other grievances to be settled between the Commissioner and the officers, but I would like the House to say that they require the Commissioner to meet the officers reasonably and fairly and to see that no injustice is done. Let the House deal with the two matters the Commissioner has distinctly declined to consider and the whole thing will be settled. I say, and while doing so I feel the full responsibility of my utterances, that I for one, representing the people of a portion of this State, will not expect these men to go on one hour longer if this is denied them; they have suffered injustices for years, they have appealed constitutionally to the Commissioner, who has ignored their requests, refused them, they come to the people's representatives and ask them to see that justice is done on two items; if the people's representatives refuse them then those men are justified, if they are men at all, to go to the people who own the railways and to say, "We have appealed to the Commissioner, he has refused us; we have appealed to Parliament and we are denied. and we come to you, the people of the State, our employers, and ask that justice shall be done." Refuse their requests and those men are justified in appealing to the people for redress against the grievances they have suffered only too long.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray): The gentleman who has just sat down has made a very long speech and in the course of it has made statements which I am quite sure many members must feel in accord

with, but I do not think we can quite agree with him in the conclusion of his speech, which practically means that if any body of State employees do not get what they demand they shall make an appeal to the people who employ them, that is the people of the State, and that the appeal shall be made in such a form as to cause the greatest inconvenience it is possible to cause to people who are the employers of those who strike. The hon. gentleman has spoken as an advocate, no doubt full to the brim with feelings of sympathy for those he represents; whether, if he had been a little more calm, he would have obtained more attention to his remarks or not, is an open question, but I do him the justice of saying I feel he was quite sincere in what he stated, and where sincerity exists we should overlook perhaps a little exaggeration. During the course of his speech, I am sorry to say, I was rude enough to put in an interjection, not done with an idea of disconcerting the gentleman I can assure him, and I am sure he feels that, but it was as to the appeal court. The employees of the railway service, whether the wages staff or the salaried staff, have the right under the Government Railways Act of appeal. The rights of their appeal are as follow:—

“Any person who being permanently employed on a Government railway is fined, or reduced to a lower class or grade, or dismissed by the Commissioner or any person acting with his authority, may appeal to an appeal board.”

There is an appeal board for every person in the service to-day and there has been ever since this Act was passed.

Mr. Johnson: How is it composed?

Mr. GEORGE: The appeal board consists of the following persons: A police or resident magistrate to be appointed from time to time by the Governor and to be chairman of the board, one person to be appointed by the Commissioner, and one person to be elected in the prescribed manner by the employees of each of the following branches—Way and Works, Traffic, Loco., and Workshops. As I take

it, although it may at first sight appear as if this only applies to the wages employees, it also applies to the salaried staff, if they choose to give their votes as to who should be on the board. Whether the provision goes as far as I think it should or not, so far as I was concerned when Commissioner of Railways, it was only in very exceptional circumstances that I refused to see anyone who had the right to see me. I have no doubt the present Commissioner is as desirous to be just to the employees as I endeavoured to be. I wanted to point out to hon. members that the second part of this Section 69 states, “rights of lower class or grade,” and from that I wish to argue, in my opinion, at any rate, that if there is a man occupying, as has been shown, a position worth £200 a year, and he is passed away without any reason, and someone drawing £110 or £130 is placed there to do the work, and does it properly, then I think that person has some right to complain that doing this higher grade of work he is suffering under a reduction which would give him the right of appeal. It seems to me strange, knowing the Commissioner as I did, intimately for five years, seeing him day by day for the whole of that time, I say it seems strange indeed, that in a case of that sort, where a man who has been doing work and doing it well, is put into a lower class, that the Commissioner should be satisfied to dismiss the appeal to him from that person. I have not now as I had at one time the various industrial agreements at my fingers’ ends, but I believe there is a clause in connection with the wages staff in which it is laid down that a person doing the work of a higher grade should receive the minimum of that particular grade. I found many anomalies existing in the Railway Department during the term I was Commissioner, and as far as my ability and experience went I grappled with them and tried to put them in a way that an ordinary commonsense business man could deal with them. I framed salaried staff regulations, which were duly approved and gazetted, and which became law, and are law to-day. Under those regulations there are certain mat-

ters preserved to the salaried staff, among them their leave computed on what was considered to be a fairly liberal scale to meet the peculiar circumstances under which the officers were working. These regulations were never considered as complete and final; they were considered by me as a foundation upon which future Commissioners could, with the assistance of men affected, evolve regulations which would act fairly to all. It was beyond all reason to expect that it was within the reach of any ordinary man to frame regulations which would meet every particular incident. Prior to these salaried staff regulations there was nothing in the department except something in the nature of hearsay or a fragmentary document, to show that the officers were entitled to anything. These salaried staff regulations are there now, and on them must be built whatever superstructure or improvements may come from the present Commissioner, or any other Commissioner. One point that the member for Guildford made was with regard to the minimum increases that were provided for the salaried staff, and I may explain to the House that this was the position. A boy enters the service, as many of them do, at the age of 15 years. He starts at £40 a year, and is allowed increases of £10 a year until he reaches £150 a year. This practically means that he has to work something like 10 years and he would then be 25 years of age before he received £150. Those salaried staff regulations were law and are law to-day, and yet that law for some reason or other has been violated. There is no Order-in-Council gazetted which has taken away the force of those salaried staff regulations, and the stoppage of these £10 increases to the men I have referred to was ill-advised, was certainly unjust, and, I believe, illegal. I will point out to the House the effect of it. If I am correctly informed it is about three years since these minimum increases stopped.

The Minister for Mines: They were stopped last year; it is rectified now.

Mr. Angwin: The last two years.

Mr. GEORGE: I am sure the Minister is interjecting to put me on the

right track, but if my information is correct, the following is the case, assuming that the three years' increments of £10 per year were stopped:—In the first year £10 is lost to the officer, and in the next year by again not receiving it, he would suffer to the extent of £20; then in the third year he should have got another £10, making up £30. Properly speaking he is £60 out. What I understand now is that the increase is to be paid this year, and that a sum is to be provided to pay the amount, but unless that sum includes not merely the £10 for this year and the £10 for last year, but the accumulation of the £10 in the way I have put it, the officers will not get the money they are entitled to receive. If the Government have gone so far as to say that this minimum increase shall be paid, they will not ask the House to accept anything else, but the assurance that the correct, legal and fair decision will be carried out. That is to say, that the officers who have been deprived of this money shall be paid an amount of money which they should have had if they had been properly paid from the start. I think if the Minister is under a misconception upon that point, and consults with the Commissioner, the Commissioner can and will give him the exact facts and confirm what I have stated. If last year was the only year these increases were stopped it makes no difference to my argument. Those salaried staff regulations of 1905 are valid to-day. They were made under the Act, they were never repealed, and you cannot go against them unless the finances of the railway system will not warrant the money being paid. The hon. member for Guildford dealt with that point, and he explained that during last year, and the year before the railway finances have shown a profit. If that is so there is no honest reason for depriving these men of their increases. I can only put it down to a misconception, and not to any desire to do an injustice to the men. Why would the Commissioner desire to do an injustice to his wages men, or to his officers?

Mr. Angwin: To make a name for himself.

Mr. GEORGE: It would be a poor name that any man would make for himself upon the miseries and the trials and shortcomings that he might inflict upon his fellow men, and I refuse to believe that there are men at the present time who could occupy such a position as that, and gloat over the misery of those he might be robbing.

Mr. Troy: Unless he is an utterly selfish man.

Mr. GEORGE: I have known some men who have been selfish, but when I have come to know them more intimately I have found that the selfishness on the surface covered something which it was possible to admire. The member for Guildford has said that we want time and a half, Sundays for the officers, not at busy stations but at slack stations, and that they cannot go on as before without more leave. I desire to point out that the conditions of employment are always changing, they have changed from the time when we were boys, and have changed since we have been men, and are changing now, so that we have to alter the conditions under which we ask people to work. In my early days, 10 hours a day for six days a week was considered the right thing; to-day eight hours is considered the right thing and I am in accord with it. If I may pass from a serious subject and become jocose for a moment, I might say that I wish to goodness we could get a six hours' day into this House. We are working more than trade hours, and I am not able to find that there is any overtime given to us. However, it might be said by anyone who started to take exception on this particular point, that when I was Commissioner of Railways I fixed up certain regulations. I have said that I looked upon those staff regulations as a foundation upon which the matter could be carried on. The Commissioner of Railways, or any other employer of labour, has to learn that as years go by the conditions of labour change, and he has to modify as times go on. At the time when those regulations were fixed those conditions seemed to be fair. I believed at the time that they were accepted as being fair,

but at the present time the officers are asking themselves this question; the dignity of the title of officer may be good, the uniform may be good, and the respect which the public neglects to pay us may be good, but if we are placed in the position of having to take the responsibility of the work, if we have to deal with "please explain," which we get from other officers, and if we are going to be placed on conditions not as good as the men we have to control, where comes the fun and pleasure and dignity of having the office? I can understand that they would willingly change their places with the wages staff if they could. Some tell me, how far it is true I do not know, that they have porters under them, working under the system of 48 and 54 hours a week, or it may be 96 or 108 hours, and these men are actually drawing more money for fewer hours than the officers themselves are drawing who are dignified as officers. According to the responsibility of a man in his work, so we can claim he should be paid, and if the responsibility of a station is thrown upon him, and we dignify him with the title of station-master, or officer in charge, surely his responsibility should be regarded as something requiring and deserving of a higher rate of pay than that given to the wages man whom he has to control. I do not think that the officers can be blamed in that respect. I would not uphold them if they talked about a strike, because I think their good sense would prevail and would let them see that unless there was justice in the strike they would blind the public for ever. If a strike occurs and the public awaken to the unfairness of it, it will recoil upon the men who led the movement. The member for Guildford knows well that when the glamour and excitement of this arbitrary means of settling disputes are over, and cool common sense prevails, the public will form a fair idea as to the rights and wrongs of the affair. I am absolutely certain that no public, whether in Western Australia or any other part of Australia, would ever permanently consent to allow a resort to force by any one portion of its service to control the Par-

liament and Government of the day. I am satisfied of that, and I am satisfied further that hon. members on the other side would themselves recognise that there is some common sense in this view. The member for Guildford says we want time and a half Sundays for the officers. That is a principle carried out in the point I have been, perhaps, labouring, namely, that in accordance with the responsibility of the work, or skill with the tools, so should the remuneration be. That could well be discussed, but not here. Hon. members may say, "Why not?" Well, the Premier has said that these things are more fit for a conference table, and so they are. How many members can claim that their life's work has been such as, to give them the necessary intimate acquaintance with the intricacies of a great railway system? Is it not a fact that there are in the House only five or six members who have had to do with the railway service? Now, if these five or six were to go and meet quietly around a table they would not make big speeches, but they would pass each other their papers and notes and scraps of information, with the idea of assisting each other to get at a just apprehension of the case. How can hon. members here—even providing a full and just appreciation of their qualities and abilities—how many members of the Chamber have the necessary knowledge to deal with this big question? We begin to talk about night allowances, time on and time off and the like. Members who have had to do with the railway service would understand it, but other hon. members require an explanation. And while not in any way attempting to censure the hon. member who introduced the motion, I think this House is not the place in which we can discuss all these details. We can discuss a principle, or a deviation from an Act of Parliament, and the Government of the day can understand from the voting what the opinion of the House may be; but to attempt to discuss the details of a huge working concern like the railways, dealing with almost every industry you can get together in its mechanical, professional, clerical and wages staffs, is to ask the House to do

really more than the House has had the necessary experience to do. I trust the outcome of this debate will be, not that the Government will be compelled to declare that they will concede all these demands to-night—I should not like to see them doing that; what I hope to see come out of this debate is the possibility of a renewed conference between the Commissioner and the gentlemen representing the officers and men, and that in this debate the atmosphere will have been so cleared that a *modus vivendi* should be arrived at.

Mr. Johnson: Would you express an opinion as to whether they should be

Mr. GEORGE: The conditions of employment are changing as times go on. I can see no reason why a man who takes the responsibility of a station, with men under him, should be placed in a worse position than the men he controls. I think that is fairly definite. And I will go further than that. Suppose it may be argued that this will cost so much money, so many thousands; that is not a factor that can weigh for one moment once your railways are producing profit. If there were a loss going on in the railways it might have some force, but with me it would only have this force, that the conditions of employment should be so moulded that in the case of loss or of gain, the disadvantage or the advantage should be shared in ratio by all concerned. The member for North Perth referred to the treatment of the old men in the service. I was glad to hear him speak of this. I have always held the view that so far as it is possible to do so, an industry has the right to support its workers when they get to the point that they are unable to carry out a full day's work. I have seen it in other countries where railways are run and where the old men may be seen doing some light work just the same as we have them doing here. It is news to me—and I can hardly take it as being exactly correct—that the present Commissioner is turning out his old men from the service without considering them or doing anything for them.

Mr. Swan: It is an undeniable fact.

Mr. GEORGE: I think there must be something in connection with it. I can hardly conceive that the Commissioner would do that. I had an intimate acquaintance with him of over five years, and I certainly did not form that opinion of him. However, in my opinion an industry should support its old men. As for this question of appeal, there should be some appeal arranged for, and there should be very little difficulty in arranging for an appeal in connection with the classification. I remember when I classified, perhaps somewhat crudely, the officers of the department, we gave them a certain time in which they could appeal against their classification, and when their appeals came in they were carefully gone into. Not in every case was it possible for me to see the officer appealing, but I saw a considerable number of them, and there is no reason to suppose that the present Commissioner is less likely to be careful of his officers than was I myself. Another point made by the member for North Perth was that in the Perth goods sheds checkers getting 8s. 6d. and 9s. a day have been reduced to goods porters, and other employees at a lower rate of wage have been put in to do the checking. If that is correct it is not a fair thing, and I think an expression of opinion from this House on that point would be a sufficient direction to those who have been trying to carry out the system. Further, it has been stated that there are certain persons who have been put to do work that other men have been doing at, perhaps, 50 per cent. higher salaries. There is a clause in the industrial agreement, of the mechanics I am sure, if not of any other branch, in which it is stated that if a person is performing higher duties he shall receive the minimum for the higher class. As an evidence that the principle is regarded as right, we have a splendid illustration in the Agent General's office. The gentleman acting as Agent General at the present time is getting a 50 per cent. increase for carrying out the duties of Agent General. Is that not recognising the principle of paying special remuneration for the carrying out of higher and

more responsible duties? And I think that what is justice in that case would scarcely be injustice to apply to those on the lower rung of the ladder. There seems to be in the Premier's mind something of this sort: that no matter how many hours a man may be employed, his remuneration shall only be according to the responsibility and value of the work he might be carrying on. This is a principle which might very well be debated in this House. The main thing at the bottom of it is, have you the right to occupy the whole of a man's time and fix the remuneration? The limit of his work is fixed by yourself and you are responsible for him. If a man is placed in charge of a station and you compel him to be there 12 hours and only give him one train, you will scarcely pay him a low wage on the grounds that he has but one train. If you will occupy his time he should have a fair remuneration for it. If you do not find work for him to do the responsibility is with you and not with him who is ready to do the work. If you are going to make it a piecework job, so much per train, that is another thing; but, of course, that would be simply ridiculous; that could not be done. If you are going to keep a man 12 hours at work, and punish him if he goes away, surely you must remunerate him accordingly. Take the case of a night officer. If he is caught napping he is punished, and properly so. Practically you say to him, "We want you for 12 hours; if you go to sleep we will punish you. We will not give you any further work to do, and we are going to pay not too generous a price for the work you do."

The Minister for Mines: The question is, is the salary a fair one.

Mr. GEORGE: That is going further into details than I propose to go. The member for Guildford said it is desirable to have the stations classified. If they are classified by the heads of departments, assisted by the representatives of the officers you will have something upon which you can go. But at the present time it appears to me the fixing of classification of the salary of a man at a particular station is some-

what of an arbitrary business, in which he has very little to say or do. That classification of stations could be done and should be done. I think you have to ask the Commissioner, and the Commissioner has to ask himself, and the Government have to ask themselves, what basis they are going to take for a start. If a man with only one horse employs a groom he has to pay him the same wage as if he employed him the whole of the eight or nine hours per day. I think that aspect of the question will have to be considered by the Government. I do not propose to go into the question of the wages men with regard to the agreement that has been made. Apparently the Government were not altogether satisfied with the times that were arranged, because, I believe, they have made some further alterations. The Minister may say the Commissioner, if he likes, but I take it the Commissioner and the Government are at one in these matters. If the Commissioner has the Government at his back, and is carrying out something the Government instruct him to do, the Government should "ante-up," the country should know and the Government should bear the burden of it. I think the question of the hours of the men can be well taken up, and will be taken up by the associations who represent the men, and this debate, if it does nothing further, will, in a great measure, place the views of the Government and of members of Parliament before the Commissioner. I would be the last in Western Australia to attempt in any shape or form to dictate to the Commissioner, or to allow anyone to coerce the Commissioner. The Commissioner has his powers under the Act, and knows them, or should know them, and he should be strong enough to carry them out; but without impropriety we should be able to intimate to the Commissioner our views. When an assemblage of men elected from all parts of the State are pretty well at one on some principle or some interpretation, the Commissioner might weigh and consider that agreement, and if he should find, on weighing it, that the carrying out of it, if his judgment approves of it, means financial loss

to the State, his duty, at any rate, will have been performed if he lays these conditions, with his recommendations, before the Government, and, when he gets the Government's fiat, if he acts upon it loyally and consistently. The question of the paying of the railways is one that could be talked on for long enough, but there is no necessity for its entering but cursorily into this debate. From my experience of five years of the Western Australian railways I say that when the Commissioner, through his Minister, learns the views of members of the House, and gives them full consideration, and arrives at a decision, and advises the Government, if he agrees with these views, what the loss will be, and if the Government accept it, the Commissioner has done his duty, and the responsibility then rests on the Government. Of course the responsibility for providing the cash must lie with the Treasurer, but the ultimate responsibility for the matter rests with Parliament when Parliament discusses the Estimates; and if Parliament is prepared to assent to the provision for the cash made by the Treasurer, it seems to me the whole circle is complete, and we shall be able to get out of our difficulties. I need say nothing more except that I hope the members of the House who have influence with the men and the officers will reconsider any of those wild statements in reference to a cessation of work. I have seen many strikes in the course of my life, and I have never seen any in the old country, or in Australia where the gainers and losers have not both suffered; and in this country with its ramifications of 2,000 miles of railroads, and its conveniences to the people, a strike would be a tremendous blow to the people who depend upon the railway for those conveniences; and the responsibility of the matter would rest upon everyone of us if we were not prepared to voice our opinions regardless of personal inconvenience. If the member for Guildford and those working with him feel that so great an injustice is being done, an injustice such as men have laid down their lives for in years gone by, then I can understand them advocating

this barbarous, and what should be the last possible weapon that should come about.

Mr. Angwin: We do not advocate it.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not saying that hon. members advocate it for one single moment, but we have been told by the hon. member that they would not be doing justice unless they advised these men to appeal to the people who were their employers. If the hon. member does not wish to take that part then I will take it myself. I speak with full knowledge and full responsibility. I know absolutely it is intended—I may say arranged—that unless matters are settled something of that sort will take place at Christmas. There can be no question about it, and it is no use our blinding ourselves to it. These members, rightly—I do not blame them—have taken up the case of these officers. Now let me ask them, having taken up their case, having fought it here, having advanced more than a step towards what they want, would they be wanting in their duty to those they represent, and their duty to the House, or to the country, if they advised, as I hope and believe they will, moderation, rather than a course of some violence, which a strike must be. The officers of the department and men of the department are too important to the State for them to be suffering loss and inconvenience. The public, the employers of these men and officers, have the right to expect some means shall be found by which the whole service in connection with the railways shall not be thrown out in connection with this matter.

Mr. Johnson: There are only two points and it can be settled.

Mr. GEORGE: I have said enough. I have given vent to my feelings on the matter, and I can only say in conclusion I hope it will be possible to resume this conference after this debate with perhaps a clearer view than there was previously and, I hope, with the best of feelings. It should not be that troubles of this sort should cause rancour to rise as is so liable to occur in cases of this disputatious nature. It will make the greatest argument against the extension of State employment if the industries of the State

are to be paralysed because one section of the State employees are not satisfied with what they are getting.

Mr. BATH (Brown Hill): I think hon. members in the House, and none more readily than those who have voiced the grievances of the railway men this evening, will endorse the sentiments of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down in regard to the undesirability of the railway servants, or any other body of workers, being compelled to take an extreme course in order to secure the redress of their grievances; and although the Minister interjected some remark that members on this side were moving in that direction, I am here to state with perfect candour all the steps that have been taken by hon. members on the Opposition side of the House in regard to the present difficulty. It is true, as the Premier has stated to-night, that I first approached him and endeavoured to impress on him the gravity of the situation, and, what is more, tried to induce him to hold that conference which the member for Murray advocates as the solution of the difficulty. Hon. members in this House, not only on this side but on the other side, are here as guardians of the public interest, and members on the Opposition side are just as ready to protect the public interests as members in another part of the House, but it is always well to bear in mind when we are discussing the grievances of this or any other body of Government employees that they are just as much part of the public as others whose interests will be affected if there is a serious outcome to any dispute. It is because we recognise that fact that hon. members, both myself and those who have followed up the initial step taken by me, have used every possible endeavour to obviate that course. It was not with any other object in view that I appealed strongly to the Minister for Mines to postpone the discussion of the Railway Estimates. I believed then that if we could only get the Premier with the Minister, and the Commissioner for Railways if necessary, and have the matter placed before the Premier first-hand by the representatives of the men, a solution could have been arrived at and the matter could

be adjusted with satisfaction to both parties, and this discussion and further acrimonious discussion might have been avoided. If the railway officers have followed the same course taken by the other railway unions and have strengthened themselves, it is due entirely to advice given by members of the Opposition. I have no hesitation in being perfectly candid on that point. I have met their representatives. I met a deputation of railway officers at Northam on one occasion when I was passing through in the train. They pointed out to me that they had had something in the nature of a railway association previously, which had had a sort of tacit patronage from the Commissioner of Railways, and that practically the only outcome was that on certain occasions they were able to place their feet under the same table as the Commissioner and call one another good fellows; and that while they appeared to have had on occasion the patronage and good opinion of the Commissioner, they were absolutely unable to secure any redress of grievances under which they were labouring. I told them that if they desired my assistance or the assistance of the public, it was first their duty to help themselves and to place their organisation on a strong basis, and then to use every endeavour to induce the Commissioner to give them some satisfaction, to give them redress of their grievances, and, failing that, in the last resort to appeal to Parliament. I know of many instances where the request of the Commissioner that they should bring their grievances to him has been acted upon, and with absolutely no good result. I know of one case where a man, to my knowledge a splendid officer of the department, a man who put his whole mind and heart into his work, who was absolutely sweated in the work. He appealed time and again for some assistance that was necessary in order to enable him to do his work without a demand upon his physical endurance that was not too great. And how was that man treated? They shifted him to a station right on the very end of the railway system, and the next man they put in his place they gave the assistance he had requested. I know

another instance where, not the individual himself, but a body acting as a progress committee was concerned about the quarters in which the officer had to carry on his work, a little place which was nothing more than a dog box, where in the summer the sun beat down with merciless heat, and where in the winter the water ran under the door and flooded the place where he was supposed to work. The progress committee took up the matter and wrote to me to see if I could do anything. I brought the question under the notice of the Commissioner, and this man, who in his previous reports had given every satisfaction and concerning whom the reports of the inspecting officers were uniformly of good character, had to submit after that to a constant flow of "Please explain," in what appears to me to be a miserable attempt to make him suffer for the action taken independently of him. These are the results that come from this individual system of securing redress of grievances. Naturally such results emphasise the need of organisation of railway officers, as of other branches of the service, so that the many may be able to fight the battles of the few. In regard to the present causes of dispute, representations have been made to the Commissioner with a very small degree of satisfaction, and, following on that, the railway officers and other railway servants have appealed to members of this House to bring the matter up, and I think it is our clear duty, where these officers fail to secure redress, to bring the matter up before Parliament or the responsible Ministers. It is my firm opinion that in this case the one obstacle in the way is that the Commissioner holds the idea that he must have sole control of the men under his charge, and that he has induced the Premier, or rather has influenced the Premier, to say that he will not consent to meet these men to have their grievances stated to him.

The Minister for Mines: The Commissioner will meet the men.

Mr. BATH: This is a difficulty I have emphasised repeatedly in this House during the discussion of the Railway Estimates, and on the amending Railway Bill which the present Minister introduced.

That sought to define the duties of the Commissioner.

The Minister for Mines: Only in regard to freights.

Mr. BATH: At that time the Minister was firm on the point that we should have Ministerial control on the question of freights.

The Minister for Mines: Ministerial responsibility.

Mr. BATH: But the questions of wages and conditions, and the men employed were to be left to the Commissioner. I pointed out then how illogical a position it was to take up. I believe we should have Ministerial responsibility in regard to the question of freights; but if it is right that the producers of the State, or those who use the railways, should be allowed to appeal over the head of the Commissioner to the Minister, or the Administration of the day, there is just as much right for the men employed, if they fail to secure redress from the Commissioner, to appeal to the same body. I fail to see that any logical argument could be advanced for the producers being able to appeal on the question of freights to the Administration while we, on behalf of the railway men, should not be able to take the same course. These men are part of the public of this State just as the producers are. They are part owners of the railways just as much as the producers, and if it is logical in the one instance it is logical in the other. If we had adopted this logical course, this difficulty would not have reached its present stage as there would have been no obstacle or etiquette which would have prevented the Minister or the Premier from obtaining first-hand information of the grievances, free from the explanations of the Commissioner which have only obscured the issue. I am in accord with the member for Murray that a conference can settle the difficulty, but that conference is not assured, and if the men forego the opportunity they have of appealing to Parliament in the last extremity it is not likely they will secure any good results from any conference that might be held. In spite of all the obstacles, in spite of all the care taken by the Minister to see that the

Commissioner shall have control as to wages and conditions, one cannot prevent the railway men from having their grievances ventilated and, if possible, redressed by Parliament. All the clauses of the Railway Act will not prevent that, and I am here to say that those men have a perfect right, and I am here to support them in the contention, failing to secure redress through the channels now permitted to them, to come to Parliament and ask that we should have the final say. What are these grievances? What the men want chiefly dealt with is, as pointed out by the member for Guildford, the question of Sunday time, and I for one am taking my share of the blame that this matter has not been ventilated earlier to the fullest extent. We have not treated these men fairly as we have acquiesced in their working these hours on Sundays without payment.

Mr. Bolton: We do an annual grumble on the Estimates.

Mr. BATH: Yes, but have never taken determined action on the matter. Members have not been fully seized of the disabilities under which these men labour. I had an opportunity recently of seeing them at work and of knowing that this is a very great hardship. These men have been expected week after week and month after month to work seven days a week for 12 hours a day winter and summer, and I ask members is that a fair thing to make these men do? If the exigencies of the railway service demand that these men shall be employed on Sunday is it not a fair thing to pay them for that Sunday work? Is not the labourer worthy of his hire? And would we not be doing a mere act of justice to pay them for the work they give to the State? As to the 48 hours a week—

The Minister for Mines: We have granted that.

Mr. BATH: If, as the Premier points out, it is possible to give this to the men on the front of the train, why deny it to the men on the back. I agree with the member for North Perth when he says that the plea put forward by the Commissioner was an evasion of his clear duty. The Minister states that the Railway Department intend to give this

right to the men, but I hope there will be no more of this attempt to control one body of workers, or rather set aside the grievances of some branches of the service, in order that they might isolate others and prevent them from securing a redress of their grievances.

Mr. Bolton: Does the Minister say that the 48 hours is conceded?

The Minister for Mines: From January 1st there will be 48 and 54 hours instead of 96 and 108.

Mr. BATH: The Minister will be able to say what that proposal means. As to the postal work imposed on railway officers. This question has been dismissed as being a trivial one, but I am able to speak from actual knowledge of the work some of these officers are called upon to perform, and it is nothing more than sweating to impose upon men already busy on railway work, who have enough to do in the 12 hours they are at work on a station, duties in connection with postal matters for the Commonwealth Government. The Railway Department get an allowance from the Commonwealth for this work, but they expect the railway officers to do it without extra remuneration. This extra work should not be imposed upon them for it is absolutely physically and mentally impossible for a man to do the two classes of work. The railway officers have to gravitate between repeated attendance on those who desire postal work to be done and the railway work for the Government. The one class of work is enough for a man, at least so far as the stations I have had an opportunity of observing are concerned. Take Goomalling, the railway officer there was called upon to do postal work. Now the Postal Department have two officers in the post office there doing the work the railway officer had to perform previously in addition to his ordinary work.

The Premier: The business has increased.

Mr. BATH: But not to the extent of requiring two men to cope with it. I admit that the business has increased, but the Commissioner has forgotten that in some of these stations where there is postal work to be done the railway work

has also increased, and that repeated requests for assistance or for postal work to be taken from them have been absolutely ignored. I have no desire to traverse the ground gone over by the member for Guildford, but I wish to repeat earnestly that I and other members have endeavoured with all the earnestness, and with all the energy at our disposal to obviate anything in the shape of industrial trouble in this State. The Premier will, I believe, acknowledge that. I have tried to impress him with the seriousness of the position, and I say it is only a mere question of etiquette, for the idea in his mind is that it is not right to interfere with the Commissioner. That is all that prevents a settlement from being successfully negotiated now. That objection, in my opinion, is not valid. If it is right for the Minister to have control of the question of freights concerning one section of the public, it is just as right for him to be able to interfere on a matter affecting another section of the public. All are our citizens, and I want to disabuse the minds of members that railway men are not worthy of consideration; they are citizens and electors: they are part of the community just as much as the producers, and in my opinion the Premier would be right to intervene in this matter and have a conference with the men, let them state their grievances squarely before him, and let him adjust the matter as he thinks right and just.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. JACOBY (Swan): The speech delivered by the member for Guildford, in which he set out the grievances of the railway employees was an admirable one, but I regret that he should have spoilt it at the end by the threat he used.

Mr. Angwin: He used no threat.

Mr. JACOBY: Taken in conjunction with the speech of the member for North Perth, it was a threat, because the member for North Perth stated distinctly that if these grievances were not redressed the men would strike.

Mr. Angwin: They will too.

Mr. JACOBY: It was wrong for any member of Parliament to threaten the people of the State, and practically incite

a portion of the service of the State to take up what is in effect simply a revolution against the State. We have in Australia, I suppose, what we may readily claim the most democratic Constitution which exists on the face of the earth, and I ask, having reached the highest stage as far as government by the people is concerned, are we to be worse off as far as civil war is concerned, than those countries which are so much behind us in respect of democracy. I have great sympathy with the case which has been presented by hon. members, and I congratulate the member for Guildford on the cogent and logical arguments he brought forward, but while it had been my intention while the Railway Estimates were under consideration to assist to ventilate the grievances of the employees of that department, I feel now, in face of the threat, that my inclinations are to remain silent and give the Government support in case of emergency. I feel, perhaps, that what we have heard represents the voice of some of the men who are firebrands, and I trust that there is no real or genuine desire on the part of the great body of men in the State to carry into effect the threats such as those which have been made. We all recognise, in dealing with the railway service, the responsibility which is placed upon the shoulders of the Commissioner. A demand has been made, an almost universal demand throughout the State, to reduce the working costs of the railways to something within reasonable limits, so that a reasonable comparison may be made with similar services in the Eastern States, and under the pressure of public opinion and criticism in this House, and under the pressure of Press criticism, the Commissioner has been endeavouring to bring those costs down to comparable limits. Under the circumstances we must remember the responsibility of the man, and the responsibility of Parliament in connection with the management of this department. I do not intend to support the opinion that the service ought to be made to pay at the sacrifice of fair treatment to the men who have to work in the service. I agree with the case put forward by the member for Guildford

that the men complain on good grounds, which no reasonable man can listen to without being convinced that they are well founded. Any of us who have opportunities of knowing the service, and knowing something of the men who work in the service, must recognise that there are some cases existing there that should not exist. It was only a fortnight ago that I had a visit from a gentleman who was employed in the Railway Department, asking me if I would give him a recommendation for a position he was applying for outside the State. I expressed my surprise, because I knew that gentleman had been induced to come from the Eastern States to take up a special position in the Railway Department. When I expressed surprise that he should desire to leave the service of a State which was developing rapidly, and where there must be any amount of opportunities for promotion, he said that he had remained in this service for over 10 years, that he had left a good position in the Eastern States to take up one here for £200 a year, and that at the present time he was still in the same position and received the same salary, and that the officer who had been appointed to fill the position he left in the Eastern States was to-day receiving £100 more per annum. Under these circumstances I induced this gentleman to tell me something about the condition of the service, and I was satisfied from what he said that the conditions existing there are not conducive to the well-being of the service, and the well-being of the State. If there is one thing more than another which should induce us to recognise that the officers in the Railway Department suffer under a serious sense of injustice, nothing could be more eloquent than the fact that those officers have combined with the wages men in order to secure justice. I cannot conceive that such an action would be taken unless it was taken under extreme pressure. As far as the question of Sunday time is concerned, it is unjust to ask those men to work an extra day of the week without receiving payment for it. I have had the opportunity at country stations of seeing the work these men do, and at one station I know of, where there was a

station-master, a porter and an occasional assistant, that station is now being worked by the station-master, who has to do the whole of the work, inside and outside of the office. I had occasion to go to that station at night time lately and I found the officer had to spend two hours every night of the week there in order to get his books ready, and in addition to all this he had to work on Sundays. I consider that is not a fair proposition and it cannot be conducive to the well-being of the railway service. If these things are to be done in the name of economy and at the sacrifice of the pockets of those men, the State is asking too much. We have to recognise that the officers who are employed in the railway service are mostly skilled men who had to get more experience than the mere ordinary clerk in order to carry out the work that they have to do, and it will be recognised, too, that the service is manned by men of capacity: there are men there who are able to work, and do work hard, and if there is any branch of the public service that can set an example to the other services of the State, I look upon the Railway Department to do it. Under all the circumstances it would be the best economy to make these men satisfied with their lot, to give them fair play and insist upon proper services being rendered, and also see that proper remuneration is given. I listened with some surprise to the remarks of the member for Murray, when he pointed out in connection with the stoppage of increments that that stoppage, as far as he was able to see, was not only unjust but illegal. And the same thing has occurred in connection with the increments to the teachers of the Education Department. There, I believe, the stoppage of the increments was absolutely illegal, and I must express surprise at the Government taking up an attitude which cannot be supported either by law or in equity. Therefore, although I regret extremely that any member should come to the House and threaten anything in the nature of a strike in any portion of the public service—whilst I regret that, I am firmly of opinion that the grievances are just, well founded, and should be redressed by the Government. I trust

that the Ministry will take steps to remove these grievances. I hope that when on some future occasion it may be necessary to bring grievances before the House the hon. member who undertakes the responsibility will be content to state them fairly and justly, and depend upon the sense of justice in hon. members without making threats. Because, after all, there is nothing more likely to defeat the purpose of such an hon. member than the making of such threats. A hon. member should be content to leave the matter to the House.

Mr. Swan: I used no threats.

Mr. JACOBY: The hon member distinctly made a threat, and the words of the member for Guildford, as I understood them, were in the same direction. However, if I have misunderstood these hon. members, I can only express gratification at the assurance that they did not intend to use threats.

Mr. Johnson: We stated exactly what the member for Murray stated, and he told you there was discontent and that there was going to be trouble.

Mr. JACOBY: Now that the matter has been ventilated in the House the grievances of these men will, I hope, be redressed, and instead of discontent we shall have a contented and loyal service in the Railway Department.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory): I regret that this discussion has not taken place upon the Estimates. Quite possibly we will have the same debate over again when the Railway Estimates are under consideration.

Mr. Taylor: You can prevent that by fixing up matters.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think it is generally understood amongst members that where there is a general feeling shown in regard to any special item in the Estimates, the desire of the Government has always been to contrive, as far as possible, to give effect to the suggestion made, and I am quite satisfied that if the arguments brought forward to-night had been adduced when the Estimates were under consideration, the result would have been equally as good as that hoped for from this special debate.

I say that any discussion here to-night can have no greater advantage than if it had taken place upon the Estimates, and I want to say in all sincerity that if hon. members come here and, under threat, ask the Government to do certain things—

Mr. Swan: Who uttered a threat?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, the suggestions made have been in the nature of threats.

Mr. Swan: I never made any threat.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member made a suggestion, and the member for Guildford referred to the suffering of these people when compelled to take a drastic step.

Mr. Angwin: But they are telling you what the men say themselves.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, if these employees are going to tell the Government at the point of the bayonet that unless certain things are done certain other things will happen, it seems to me that no Government would be worthy of their position if they were to give way under political or other pressure of the sort. There was no necessity to make such suggestions. The general desire is to see that any person employed in the Government service should receive, if not better, at least equal consideration with those employed outside. As far as the Government are concerned, time after time they have, through the Commissioner of Railways, endeavoured to make the conditions of the men working on our railways better than they have been in the past. The Premier himself in speaking to-night informed the House of what had been done during his term of office in making industrial agreements. The member for Guildford, who gave us such a display of oratorical talent to-night, was himself Minister for Railways in 1905, when the men were forced into the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Angwin: How long was he there?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: During the whole period of the trouble. During the term of that Administration, when the Labour Government had the power to do something for these employees they allowed the employees to be forced into the Arbitration Court; and the

award of the court spelt far worse conditions than had obtained before. Time after time the present Government have improved the conditions of these men. In regard to the Sunday time of wages men, that was inclusive; but we have made Sunday exclusive, and any person working on Sundays since the alteration was made is paid time and a half. There has been some discussion to-night in connection with the action of the Commissioner when dealing with the wages staff in asking that there should be a 96 hours period. I cannot compliment the member for North Perth either on the way in which he put his case or on the personal remarks he made in regard to the Commissioner. There was no necessity to bring before the House any remarks of a personal nature. Remarks of that sort should be condemned. However, in regard to these men the Commissioner was desirous of bringing the conditions of the railway servants in Western Australia into line with those existing in the Eastern States. In all the other States of the Commonwealth, except Victoria, they have a 96 hours period, and the Commissioner was desirous of making the same conditions apply in Western Australia. He told the wages staff of this, and although he had not that alteration made in its entirety—because we had a conference and when dealing with the locomotive men it was found expedient to keep to the 48 hours they had had for so many years,—he immediately advised me that in his opinion it would be preferable to alter the period of the labour staff. And now we are prepared to make those conditions from the 1st January, 48 hours or 54 hours, as the case may be.

Mt. Bolton: Will you explain the 48 hours and the 54 hours?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The 48 hours apply to men working on busy stations, and 54 to the men on stations where the work is intermittent. For instance, at Collie they have asked that the station should be brought into line with the stations of the metropolitan area, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Northam, and other stations classified as 48 hours stations.

The Commissioner will be quite prepared to consider applications from time to time. Some stations might be 48 hours period at one time, then business might go down, and what had been busy stations might be re-classified as 54 hours shortly afterwards. Then in making our industrial agreement with the locomotive men we have given increases that are going to cost the country £2,300 a year. Supplementary Estimates are making provision for £3,000 for the reclassification of the railway staff. The staff is now being reclassified. In connection with that reclassification we had some extraordinary arguments brought forward by the member for Guildford and by the leader of the Opposition. The latter in dealing with the matter referred to the amending Act of 1907 which provided that the Government had the power to supersede the action of the Commissioner of Railways in regard to the charges on freights. I pointed out on that occasion the absolute unfairness of the Government having the power to compel the Commissioner to increase or reduce the freights without at the same time taking the responsibility for the action. At the time of the reduction of the timber freights action was taken by the Government contrary to the advice of the Commissioner, and in other instances the Government have desired increases or reductions. I say it is the duty of the Government, when these things are done, to take the responsibility. It was for that purpose the amendment was placed in the Act. So far as the classification of the officers is concerned, the 1904 Act provided that the Commissioner must classify them, and at no time since that Act has come into force has there been any other system of classification than that the Commissioner shall be supreme.

Mr. Bath: I did not confine it to classification. I made it apply to all conditions.

Mr. Angwin: Never mind that; tell us the exact position.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The exact position is this, that the members of the staff have the right to appeal, but only under certain conditions. As far as

the question of wages and salaries is concerned, that is a matter controlled by the Commissioner and afterwards by Parliament. At all events Parliament has the supreme control so far as the expenditure of money is concerned, but the Commissioner has been given special powers by the Act to provide for the classification of the employees; and if it is thought that this power should not be given to the Commissioner, the wisest course would be to repeal the section and give the Government and Parliament the right of doing what the statute now gives power to the Commissioner to do. There are several concessions given which I would like to deal with. The Commissioner has been desirous of trying to give some concessions to the officers—I do not want to deal with the requests that have been made—but to grant the extra holidays to these officers will mean an additional £1,000 to the department. In dealing with the industrial agreement with the wages staff we brought the minimum from 6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. a day. The member for Guildford, when speaking in reference to the conference which took place, said that the Premier and I refused to concede in any shape or form when discussing the question; but the hon. member was told distinctly that in regard to the requests made by the night officers it was the Commissioner's intention to consider the advisability of framing regulations to give longer holidays to these men. At present those continuously engaged for 12 hours a day for seven days a week get 15 days every half-year as holidays. It is suggested that they should be paid for the time that they work on Sundays, but the Commissioner considers it would be better in the interests of the Railway Department that, instead of giving payment for this work, increased holidays should be given. Under the regulations holidays are given to these officers on account of their being compelled to work these very long hours. Night officers on big stations who are on duty each night 12 hours are given 15 days' leave each half-year exclusive of Sundays.

Mr. Bath: That includes the ordinary leave to which they are entitled.

Mr. Bolton: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would not say it is not the case. I am only dealing with this as I find it in the regulations. These men get 15 days every half-year. Possibly there might not be two hours' work a day for a great number of these men. In many instances they have only one or two or three trains passing during the whole period they are employed, but they have to be on duty the whole 12 hours for seven days a week; and the question is whether we should not give them longer holidays with a view to feeling sure they will be fresh and able to carry on their duties rather than give them increased pay and less holidays.

Mr. Gill: We do not ask for increased pay where they are on stations with two or three trains a day.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we are to give payment to these men for Sunday work they must lose the long holiday.

Mr. Gill: Certainly.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Is it not better in the interests of the travelling public and the safe working of the railways that these men should be given longer leave for each of these Sundays rather than money compensation?

Mr. Bath: It is likely that if you had to pay for it you would find the need for lessening the hours.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is a matter that needs consideration. It is a question whether we should give them increased pay, or increased leave so that they can come back fresh to their duties. The Commissioner has to consider what is best in the interests of the railway service. We have no right to form ourselves into an arbitration court to try to decide as to the conditions of employment of the people. If the conditions are unsatisfactory and unfair an arbitration court or a special conference could be arranged so as to inquire fully into any of the grievances; but for Parliament to try and put itself in the position of the judges as to whether the conditions are fair or unfair, is not a right thing to do. During the past few years we have out-

side of the award of the arbitration court, and with a view of classifying the officers and making industrial agreements with the wages staff and the locomotive staff, given concessions that mean an expenditure of over £11,000 a year. We are prepared, and the Commissioner is prepared, to give consideration to the questions raised. Although there have been a lot of statements made to-night reviewing the service from one end to the other, the chief cause of complaint is as to the payment for Sunday labour for the officers and the hours of work.

Mr. Gill: Those are the principal items.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There may be other matters, but I think the member will not ask the House to deal with them.

Mr. Gill: They will be asked to unless the principal questions are decided.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not want at this stage to go into all the small items, but these two are the principal questions brought forward—payment of Sunday time of officers, and the hours of duty. I believe there has been another question to the effect that the whole of the railway staff should have 48 hours instead of 96 and 108. I was pointing out that so far as we were concerned we have made a great number of concessions. In connection with the clerical staff the Supplementary Estimates will provide for £3,000 for their increases. The classification was not complete when the Estimates were framed, for the Commissioner did not know what amount would be necessary, and it was our intention to ask for an excess vote in connection with that matter so that provision would be made for the officers from the 1st July. But the Supplementary Estimates will provide £3,000 for the payment of increased salaries found necessary as a result of the classification. The system of classification adopted by the Commissioner is to my mind an excellent one. So as to have the classification in the various branches, the Locomotive, the Way and Works, and the Traffic, by which all should be placed on the same basis, the various heads were appointed as a classification board. Their classifica-

tion has been published and distributed among the officers, and they have been asked to appeal. As the Act provides, the Commissioner is the final arbiter in regard to that matter. I need not discuss the question of cadets, for that can be dealt with on the Estimates. Members can rest assured that every provision is made that cadets will not only receive the ordinary increases but increases to the same extent as if there had been no reduction last year. The member for Murray was wrong in the statement he made that this was done two or three years ago. Last year a reduction was made, and this year an increase has been given, but a double one. For instance, an officer receiving £130 the year before last, and who did not receive an increase last year, will get not only the £10 but an additional £10 as well this year. Comparisons have been made as to the condition of the railway officials in Western Australia and those in the East. The member for Guildford quoted a number of States where the salaries paid were different from those paid here. He only drew attention to the method adopted in the other States so far as Sunday time to officials is concerned. He inferred that the conditions of employment in the East are better than here. I want to tell members that, so far as the period in which the men work in Victoria is concerned, it is much worse than here, for there it is for a month. A man may work overtime one week and get kept back the next week, work excess the following week, and so long as at the end of the month the period is made as one in which there is no overtime, he gets no overtime pay even if he has worked 70 hours in one of the four weeks. With the other States the period is 96 hours, or an increased number according to the nature of the employment. Here we have a 96 hour period, but we have advised the staff that it is our intention from the 1st January to make a weekly period. It must be remembered that this concession is going to cost the department £1,300. It will be looked upon as a great concession by the men. With reference to Sunday time, the New South Wales method is exactly the same as we adopt here. I

think the holidays given in New South Wales are in excess of those we give, and as I have informed the House the Commissioner will be only too pleased, as he has recommended, to decide that the holidays to be given to those officers should be increased beyond what they are now. This is a question for very serious consideration. Recognising as we must that it is essential that a man should be employed in a majority of instances for 12 hours a day we have various changing places. There is very little work to do, and to employ three men at each of those places would cost the country from £10,000 to £15,000 a year more; that is to give eight hours' work at these various stations.

Mr. Bolton: Surely you do not think with any seriousness of having three men at these stations.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It would be necessary to give eight hours' duty.

Mr. Bolton: We do not ask for that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: To give eight hours' duty at all these places there must be three men. It is said they do not ask this now, but I know what will follow.

Mr. Bolton: They will not ask for an eight hours' day. The Locomotive staff have had 48 hours a week for seven years, but they have not asked for an eight hours' day.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I want the House to understand that if this were done it would mean an extra cost of from £10,000 to £15,000. The duties at many of these stations are small, and the question is whether it is not wiser to give increased holidays rather than payment for Sunday work and less holidays. These men are looking after the safety of the public. An accident occurring on account of men being kept continuously at work, week in and week out, year after year, without a fairly lengthy holiday, would result in more harm to the railway system by the payment for work done, and more continuous employment than would occur if there were longer holidays and less employment. That is the position as I find it at the present time and it is a question which

requires very serious consideration indeed. In Victoria they pay their staff for Sunday work, but in New South Wales that system is not adopted; they prefer there to give the men extended holidays. As far as the hours of duty are concerned, since the deputation waited on the Commissioner, he issued instructions to the Chief Traffic Manager that every effort should be made in the metropolitan area to reduce the period of employment, and a very big reduction has been made. I will not at this late hour weary hon. members by going into the question, but I might briefly state that some 22 officers have received a certain amount of relief and it is the intention of the Government to endeavour to give further relief to these officers. It is our desire to try and do that. It is only a short time since these representations were made and it is the Commissioner's intention to try and make the conditions of these men better than they have been in the past. I want to impress upon the House that we have been trying for the past three years to improve the position of these men. Although we have effected great economies in connection with the working of the railways, and those economies I might say were begun by the former Commissioner, Mr. George, who himself made some big reductions, no one knows better than he does the difficulties with which one is confronted. These reductions, however, have not been effected at the expense of the men, and in no case can it be shown that we have reduced their wages. On the contrary in nearly every instance we have increased the minimum rate of payment, which eighteen months ago was 6s. 6d., to 7s. 6d., though the Commissioner's recommendation was that the amount should be 7s. That was a big concession and it was much appreciated by all railway people. In connection with the ordinary wages staff, we made the minimum 8s. and we have loyally carried out the agreements made then. The member for Swan waxed indignant because of an interjection I made with reference to political influence. It was pointed out by the member for Guildford that the conference with

the Commissioner having proved in a sense abortive it would be necessary to bring political influence to bear with the view of getting redress, and he stated that he encouraged the men to go to him with their grievances. I hold that while we have the present Railway Act that is not a fair stand for members to take. It is neither correct nor fair, because if we are going to have Parliament forming itself into an arbitration court on every occasion to deal with questions of this sort, then Parliament will be dealing with something it has no knowledge of and which ought to be dealt with by the heads of departments, and the end will be trouble. I have no desire to say anything further than this. The Commissioner is quite prepared to meet the salaried officers with regard to this matter. He will be only too pleased to confer with them, and he has already advised me that he is prepared to consider an extension of the period of leave and that he is prepared to do all that he possibly can. In all large centres he is prepared to endeavour to provide a staff for the purpose of relieving these men and making their conditions better than they are at the present time. He is prepared also to appoint further officers with the view of relieving and giving additional holidays to those at changing stations, and there may be other points with regard to which he may be able to make concessions. I do say that under a threat that if Parliament does not direct that certain action shall be taken a certain result will follow, Parliament should stand solid and see that the interests of the State are protected. There should not be any necessity for anything of this sort because the Government have shown a keen desire to see justice done; not only to the railway employees but all the employees of the State. That being the case I can see no reason in the event of the officers meeting the Commissioner, why there should not be an amicable ending to what appears at present to be a dispute between them and the department. As far as the question of men being employed on Sunday is concerned that is rather difficult to decide, but it is worthy of the great-

est consideration whether redress should be given by way of payment or by increased holidays.

Mr. FOULKES (Claremont): I can hardly believe it can be seriously meant that unless these employees of the Railway Department secure redress for their grievances steps will be taken in the nature of a strike. I have no doubt that outside the railway service there are many men who are prone to make threats, but so far, judging from the inquiries which I have made, there have been no threats made by any organisation of railway men. There must be a good deal of sympathy with the Commissioner of Railways because there is no doubt he is placed in a most difficult position. He has to find a certain amount of money and he has to show that the railways must be made to pay and consequently he must look at these questions apart from the claims of the employees and apart from the claims brought forward by the various people who travel on the railways. The Minister for Railways and, I think, the Premier, have pointed out that the Government have shown their good will for the Railway Department, because during the last 12 months they have made concessions amounting to something like £11,000. That, to my mind, proves that the Government are anxious to see that justice be done to the railway employees. But we have to bear in mind that the railway men also have made great concessions by reason of the fact that a number of them have been retrenched for financial reasons, the result being that those who are left have had to hustle more than at any time gone by. Judging from what I have seen, one class of men I consider really have a grievance and are entitled to full consideration, namely, the station-masters in the metropolitan area. Not many members can realise what a distinct change has taken place in regard to Sunday traffic on our metropolitan lines. There is an enormous traffic now over the lines between Midland Junction and Fremantle, and for all practical purposes the passenger traffic is quite as heavy as it is upon week days. The result

is that our station-masters are kept tied to their posts working 10 and 12 hours every other Sunday; and no class of work is so onerous and burdensome as Sunday work. The Minister for Railways pointed out that he is anxious to meet the wishes of these men by giving them greater concessions as regards time or extra pay for the work they do on Sundays. I do not know which would be the better for the department or the men. This is a matter which requires very grave consideration.

Mr. Johnson: They work 49 Sundays, and only get 12 days by way of compensation.

Mr. FOULKES: I am not going into the question as to the best form of remuneration. What I want the House to consider is the necessity for the Premier to meet these men and discuss the matter fully. This is not the first time such a situation has occurred, because I can remember very well in the year 1902, when the late Mr. Leake was Premier, there was some dispute and the men were on the eve of going out on strike. Mr. Leake decided to meet these men, and the difficulties were adjusted after two or three hours. And I believe that if our Premier was to attend a conference of railway officers there is not the slightest doubt they would come to terms. I would strongly recommend the Premier to follow the precedent set by Mr. Leake. The Premier is a business man, and he knows well it is extremely difficult to negotiate terms through an intermediary. I believe the Commissioner is anxious to come to terms with the men, but probably he finds his hands tied, and, therefore, I suggest that the Commissioner and the Premier should go down and meet all the employees of the railways and see whether a solution cannot be arrived at.

Mr. BOLTON (North Fremantle): I hesitate to add any remarks to what has already been said to-night. Still, I want to assure the member for Murray that I am here in a conciliatory spirit, and any effort I can put forward to prevent industrial trouble may be relied upon. I have had some experience with similar

trouble before, and my advice will always go out to the men, "Keep away from this industrial strife if you can." I took a note of the member for Murray's concluding remarks. He said in reiteration that he objected to the concluding remarks of the member for Guildford when the latter was talking "strike"; but he did not offer any other suggestion as to what was to be done by these men. He said that the member for Guildford had declared that the men must appeal to the people, and that they had a right to appeal to the people, having appealed through all other channels, even to Parliament. The member for Murray did not advise the men what they were to do having exhausted all the channels, even that of Parliament. I take it his suggestion would be: "Try every means you can to gain redress of your wrongs, and then drop it and forget all about it." Whilst I am not going to counsel the men taking any drastic step, I entirely disagree with the member for Murray. I feel, as the men must feel, that they have been gradually worked up to their present state not only by the grievances enumerated, but by little pinpricks brought about by unsympathetic administration. They wait upon the head of the branch and try to settle the matter, but they get very little satisfaction. They go then to a higher tribunal, to this House, and if they cannot get satisfaction here what are they to do; simply to let the matter drop? And although we cannot counsel them taking the matter into their own hands, I ask, for the advice of these men, what are they to do when they cannot get grievances redressed in this House? Use their strength? I cannot see anything else for it. I regret very much indeed, perhaps more than any member in the House, that the men have come to this decision announced to-night by the member for Murray. I did not hear any threat by any member in this House. The only direct information came from the member for Murray. He must have had inside information to give that statement. He must have known what he was talking about. The Minister referred to the

payment of wages in the other States, and also spoke of less holidays and Sunday pay. But I think it is unwise to distinguish between the different States. I contend, as I have before contended in this Chamber, that generally speaking the railways of the Eastern States cannot compare with the railways in this State for efficiency, good staff, good service, good vehicles and good equipment. Our railway service will hold its own with that of any State, and when we have a staff that gives entire satisfaction and is so very free from accidents of a serious nature, that performs its duties on a narrow gauge railway without complaint, the employees from the highest to the lowest are deserving of better consideration than is given in any State whose railways are not doing well. In my opinion there is nothing to compare with the railways of this State taking them all round. The Minister said the department had conceded something like £11,000; but that has nothing to do with the grievances brought before the House. That £11,000 might have been split up among five or six individuals, and would be no consolation for these men fighting for years without proper organisation for the redress of their grievances. It is of no use to them. Notwithstanding all the old grievances brought forward to-night, I propose to confine my remarks to the two real points at issue which, if satisfactorily settled, could close this discussion and lead the way to an amicable arrangement which I sincerely hope will be the outcome of the discussion. Certain officers have been working 84 hours in the week for years past. They have been trying for years to have that altered, but they have been unsuccessful. A few years ago these same officers had 52 nights in the year in addition to their annual leave for the heavy Sunday work. In 1905 that arrangement was withdrawn, and the annual leave was reduced by 34 days to these same officers who had no organisation. Surely that is a definite statement—34 days less per year allowance for Sunday work than they had prior to 1905? Was it not sufficient for

them to begin to grumble, to say, "We must have organisation to put our grievances before the department and the Government as one man, and not have each individual complaining?" That is a fair grievance. The position is perhaps better to-day than it was at one time, but it is by no means satisfactory. If Sunday time should be made to stand alone with these officers as it does with the wages staff, and if these officers when required to work should be paid for it, there would be fewer officers working on the Sunday than has been the case up to date. An instance was mentioned by the member for Guildford where a station master and a night officer divided the 24 hours of the day between them, each taking 12 hours. Recently an arrangement was made to lessen the hours of those two men, but how was it done? It was done by a third officer being asked to take the middle shift between the station master and the night officer, for which he received no pay whatever. Is that a fair thing? This man was a salaried officer, and received no pay whatever, although the night officer and the station master got less hours. Is that going to satisfy them, and should it satisfy the organisation to pick out an individual and reduce the hours of one or two men at the expense of others? I do not think the House would agree to that. The Minister says there are stations where the officers only work two or three hours a day. I wish he had used the same argument when he talked of the necessity for 54 hours for the wages staff. If there be cases where men work only two hours a day, but it is necessary for them to be there to take responsibility during the whole time, surely it is easy for the Minister to say that the porters and station staff at these places where he desires 54 hours to be worked may as well do nothing during eight hours as during nine hours. The Minister used figures that the alteration from 96 hours a fortnight to 48 hours a week, and from 108 hours a fortnight to 54 hours a week, would cost £1,300, but I want the Minister to make particularly clear what he means by the 48

hours and the 54 hours. He said the 48 hours was to apply to what are known as busy stations, and the 54 hours to those places known as slack stations. I cannot understand how it is the Minister has been supplied, as I suppose he has been, by the Commissioner with such silly information, such absurd information. If they are prepared to concede 48 hours to the busy stations, the big stations in the metropolitan area, it represents at least eleven-twelfths of the total expenditure should the 48 hours be made universal, and if it is going to cost £1,300 to give 48 hours to the busy stations it will only take another £110 to give it to the whole of the officers, and this discussion is costing more than that. If it is only a matter of pride and wanting to fall on a soft place, I am for one most willing that the Minister should do so; but the 48-hours-a-week principle is in the country to stay; it will be put forth to-night and after to-night; and if the system can be arranged at a cost of £1,300 for eleven-twelfths of the employees I think it only needs a little straight and careful talk perhaps with the Premier and others to come to a decision and a fair decision. I believe the Premier has been led to believe it would be too heavy a cost to the country, but that cannot be the case if the figures given to the Chamber to-night are correct. I wish to refer to an argument used, I understand by the Commissioner in the presence of the Premier, that the reason the 48 hours could not be conceded to the amalgamated society was that it would cost £1,500 at one locomotive depot to concede it to the locomotive engine-drivers, firemen and cleaners. The Commissioner forgot the system was in existence for a good many years. He claimed the £1,500 was to be paid at Wagon for work not performed, but for time made up owing to their having 48 hours a week instead of 96 hours a fortnight. According to the Commissioner's figures, this means that there must be three drivers at 14s. a day; three fireman at 10s. a day, and three cleaners at seven shillings and sixpence a day idle for eight hours every week. What an absurd idea! The figures may have been genuine

enough, but they were not explanatory enough when put before the Premier. But if they were put forward without explanation they were misleading. I decline to accept the figures of the Commissioner as being genuine in the least degree. It was absolutely unfair to include, as must have been done, all holiday pay in that amount and swell it to £1,500. If it costs £1,500 to continue the 48 hours at one locomotive depot, of course there would be no justification for continuing it all over the service. I do not know that length of speeches does any good, any more than short ones. I believe the points have been well touched upon to-night by the different speakers, and I do not think I could do any more good to the cause by speaking for three hours, even if I were able to do so. I have taken part in at least one conference with the Premier, and I believe he met us in a good spirit. I think that if we had had more time much greater success would have been achieved. If we give more time, perhaps, to another conference some good will result. If the Premier is prepared to talk the matter over and an amicable arrangement can be arrived at, I should be glad, and I shall be pleased to know if that can be arranged. I do not want to keep this going. I know members have not taken advantage of the opportunity to air their grievances, for the members who have spoken recognise the gravity of the position. They have not made use of statements they could have made, for certain members are in possession of information they have not given to members. Perhaps it was wise of them not to make that information public, but I trust the trouble will be avoided and that some arrangement will be come to, not because members have brought the matter forward and forced the Government to do so, but because it will be for the good of all. I believe it is a misunderstanding that can be arranged, and I trust the opportunity will be given for such a conference before we meet again. I hope the Premier will meet us.

Mr. GILL (Balkatta). I do not intend to keep members any time after all we have heard. The case has been put

fairly well by members; still there are two or three points that should be mentioned before we close the debate. In the first place, I have been disappointed that we have not had some indication of a desire for a conference to see if the trouble can be amicably arranged, as I think it could, between the Premier and the Commissioner, and some of the members of Parliament, or members of the different organisations chiefly concerned. Exception has been taken by one or two members, and also by the Minister, to some of the remarks made by members on this side of the House, who have put the case for the associations, and it has been said that they have put a pistol at the head of the Minister. There was no intention to adopt that attitude by any of those members who have spoken as to the association's possible action in the future in the event of their grievances not being settled. The idea as it appeared to me was that those members desired the House clearly to understand the seriousness of the position as it had presented itself to them, and as they know it to be. It would be no use for members to bring forward grievances and take up the time of the House and allow other members to be able to say afterwards, "We did not know the position was so serious, or that the gun was loaded." They have been told to-night that the gun is loaded, and none have said that in more straightforward terms than the member for Murray. That member must have received outside information. Other members who alluded to this aspect of the question desired the House to understand that the position was serious and well worthy of serious consideration. I do not intend to traverse all the grievances, or deal with the question of the officers, as that has been referred to very fully. There is one point, however, I wish to refer to, for it deals with a question which before long will have to be settled, and on which the Commissioner has taken a very decided stand. It applies both to the officers and the Amalgamated Association of Railway Employees, and it is with regard to the

Commissioner's attitude when dealing with what he terms individual grievances. He has taken up a stand that the associations have no right to deal with individual grievances, and he says that such is embodied in the terms of the agreement arrived at.

The Premier: Did not the Commissioner say that he was prepared to consider any case brought under his notice by any person.

Mr. GILL: Yes; but not through the organisation. The particular case to which I will refer he refused to deal with through the association. In every agreement drawn up it is provided, and properly so, that no guard shall travel over a road officially until he has learnt the route and gone over it twice. The regulation provides that the guard must go two trips over the road before he takes charge of a train. On one occasion recently a guard was instructed to proceed with a train into the country on a track he had never been before. He said he did not know the road, but it was a case of emergency and he was told he must go whether he knew the road or not, and that the department would be responsible. He went with the train and doubtless the fact that he did not know the road accounted for his arrival at his destination 14 minutes late. He explained in his journal the reasons for the delay, but he was disgraced owing to the late arrival of the train. The association took the matter up, but the Commissioner declined to deal with that body, for he said it was an individual matter between him and the guard. I say, as every unbiassed man would say, that there is a principle at stake which the association had full right to deal with. If the Commissioner takes this stand, the matter applies both to the officers and the amalgamated association. This action of the Commissioner simply means that the association in future will be of no use to the members of the railway service. There are several similar cases of officers that could be quoted. I will mention one other. An officer who, for the last 15 years to my

knowledge, has been in charge of a station, was 18 months ago put in control in a place he had not been before; but he was not allowed a house allowance, the plea being that he was physically defective. As a matter of fact he has only one arm. He had been in charge of stations for 15 years and conducted his work satisfactorily to the department, and yet we find now that, in their retrenchment scheme, the department have put him to another station, and refuse to give him the house allowance to which he is entitled. When he asked for justice and to have the allowance granted he was given to understand that if any noise was made he could go outside the service. That is unsatisfactory; the Commissioner will not deal with the association in the matter. In every instance which has come under my notice I found various individual attempts to bring cases before the heads of the department, but the victim was penalised and threatened with all sorts of penalties if he did not keep quiet. I know of a case where an officer brought his grievance before the head of the department, and he was told that if he did not like it he would be transferred to another station where the salary would be reduced. This is the kind of treatment meted out to officers who have the courage to bring their individual cases under the notice of the Minister. It is matters like these that bring about discontent, and they are matters which will have to be settled. They are of considerable importance to all the members of the officers or wages staffs. I wish to deal also with the appeal board. The appeal board they are asking for is an appeal board to whom they can appeal against the classification of the service. There is the appeal board which was appointed by the member for Murray, but I assert that the board as established by statute is not one to which they can appeal with regard to their classification; that is, the rate of salaries they are classified at. The member for Murray takes up the stand that if they are sent to a station worked at £200 previously and they are paid £170, they are justified in assuming that they are re-

duced in salary. That would be so if the stations were classified. In most places the stations are classified as second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth, and each station carries a certain salary. If that were so here and an officer were sent to one of those stations and he did not get the salary attached to the position, he would be justified in going to the appeal board. Seeing that our stations are not classified, and seeing that there is not much probability of a classification, there is not much opportunity of appealing in order to have the classification reviewed. Even if it were so, what about the administrative officers. They would have no opportunity whatever. What the officers' association are working for is an appeal board to deal with the classification. This grievance will have to be rectified. It has caused a great amount of dissatisfaction in addition to the others which have been brought forward. I am not going to deal further with the officers. There are one or two matters in connection with the wages staff that I wish to deal with. There is the 48 hours a week question which has been thrashed out, and as explained by the member for North Fremantle, it would not entail increased expenditure in connection with the finances of the State. The Minister himself pointed out that in connection with all the important stations in the metropolitan area, and in the country districts, they have consented to the 48 hours per week, and that at some of the other stations, where the work is intermittent, they insist on 54 hours. The Minister is of the opinion that this is satisfactory to the amalgamated society. I want the Minister and the Premier to understand that the amalgamated society has decided that they will not accept his proposal; that is definite. Seeing that the 54 hours are only to apply to stations where the work is intermittent there will be no increase in expenditure, and, consequently, I cannot see any reason for refusing to make the 48 hours a week general throughout the system. It has been pointed out that the work is intermittent. It will, however, only apply to one porter.

There may be instances where it will apply to two porters, but where there is only one porter, and, perhaps, only two or three trains a day, there is nothing to prevent the station-master so arranging the work of that porter so that no increased expenditure will be incurred. Under the present system he is on for nine hours, and he must attend the stations for nine hours whether there is anything to do or not. It is just the same where we relieve officers. Previously to the deputation of officers to the Commissioner these men had to sit on a station for 12 hours whether they had anything to do or not. The Commissioner thought they could just as well be at home in their beds and he allowed them to go home. The same thing applies to many porters on the country stations, and there can be no reasonable objection whatever to the 48 hours throughout the service to get over that difficulty. There is another matter. The Commissioner has entered just recently into an agreement with some of the ticket collectors, and in this agreement he shows that his anxiety is not to increase remuneration. This agreement provides that the collectors shall receive so much per week. The original agreement stipulated for 8s 6d. per day of 8 hours. Now the agreement with four ticket collectors provides that they are to work seven days a week for a fixed sum and not at so much per day. This is another matter that the association have in hand and wish to see dealt with, and it is one that they intend to fight. I think they are justified in taking that matter up, as it is undoubtedly a direct violation of the agreement. There is yet another matter that I wish to touch upon in order to show the way in which the men are treated at the present time. I allude to the action of those who are responsible for the engagement in the service at the present time of men who can be termed nothing else but a lot of "pimps." Men in the railway service at the present time are being degraded by having to work in the company of these people, and I am given to understand, whether rightly or wrongly, that these pimps—and that is

the only name that I can find to fit them—are called detectives in the department, but no one worthy of the name of a detective would work on such a job. They deliberately go out and dig holes for the men to fall into; they set traps for them, and a man can hardly escape falling in. The same thing prevailed in the railways about six years ago. On that occasion it was proved that several of these men engaged in the work were gaoled birds of the worst type. In one instance one of the oldest guards in the service, a man to be relied upon in every sense of the phrase, took up one of these persons down the road and went to excess him, but this gentleman said “I have not the 1s. 11d. on me, I am a bit short to-day.” The man was fairly well dressed, and the guard jocularly remarked “It is the way of the world, up one day and down the next.” He wrote out a ticket and gave it to the man, and paid the 1s. 11d. himself. But because he did not charge the man 1s. 11d. that guard was punished by being sent away into the country. Is that the way to treat a man? We find these fellows going round to other stations. I could give dozens of instances on a par with the one I have mentioned. This is the kind of thing men have to put up with from the officers of the Railway Department. Oftentimes they set themselves out to harass the men and cause as much inconvenience and trouble to the men as they possibly can. Difficulties are placed before us, supposed difficulties in the way of rectification of these railway matters which should be settled without the necessity of bringing them to the House, but it is only through the stubbornness of the system adopted in the railway service, through the determination to make things as awkward and inconvenient as possible for the staff. I hope that the Premier will be able to announce to-night that some means will be adopted of getting a conference. This matter could, I think, be arranged by the exercise of a little commonsense on both sides. However, it would be a serious dispute if it is not settled in the near future.

12 o'clock midnight.

The PREMIER: With the permission of the House I would like to say that the debate to-night has been productive of a lot of facts with which I was not previously acquainted, and as I said in concluding my few remarks, I am prepared to meet those representatives of the Association in order that we may discuss the question. Railway disputes have occurred on previous occasions during the time I have had the honour to be the head of the Government, and I have found that with a fair amount of reasonableness, on either side, very often disputes, which when first stated, seemed to be bristling with difficulties, are discovered to be capable of being overcome after a little discussion. When these matters are placed before both sides in conference the necessity that exists for avoiding extravagance is realised, and very often it is found possible to arrive at an arrangement mutually beneficial to the employees and to the State. I am satisfied that after a conference is held some reasonableness will be exhibited on both sides, and I trust that the result will be that many of the difficulties which beset the railway service at the present time, may be removed. I hope that such a settlement can be arrived at as will be satisfactory to all concerned.

Mr. SWAN (in reply): I understand that the Premier is prepared to meet the representatives of the men concerned in this difficulty on Monday with a view to trying to bring about a settlement of the difficulty. I am thoroughly satisfied that the men are quite willing that their case should be submitted to the judgment of the Premier, and I have no doubt that his decision will be satisfactory to both sides. In view of that I am prepared to withdraw the motion. I would like to say before sitting down that I am sorry that some hon. members have taken it that I used a threat in moving the motion. My idea was merely to place hon. members in possession of the same information as I had myself with a view of letting them see exactly the seriousness of the position. I had no desire to make a threat. I desire now to withdraw the motion.

Mr. JOHNSON : Before I can agree to the withdrawal of the motion I desire to know whether the conference will be held on Monday, and if it is to be a conference of the men or whether members on either side of the House will be present also ? I want to distinctly understand what is promised before I depart from the position I have taken up.

The PREMIER : I understood the leader of the Opposition to say that, provided I would meet the representatives of the men they would be satisfied. Whether any other members of the House desire to be present is immaterial so far as I am concerned. I see no very grave objection to be taken. All I want is to bring about a settlement. I would just as soon talk it over with one man as with half-a-dozen, but I must arrange to have someone with me from the Railway Department who will be able to post me with the facts, because I cannot be expected to have an intimate knowledge of the working of the department.

Mr. JOHNSON : It will be held on Monday.

The PREMIER : I will try and arrange it for Monday afternoon. I wish to go to Bunbury, but I will be back at 2.30 o'clock on Monday, although I do not expect concluding the conference on that day. Perhaps it will be adjourned till next day.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

BILL—GOOMALLING-WONGAN HILLS RAILWAY.

Second reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd December.

Mr. TROY (Mount Magnet) : I do not think we should be called upon at this hour of the night to discuss these railway Bills ; it is unfair.

Mr. Scaddan : Give us a train and we will go home.

Mr. George : It will take me two hours to speak.

Mr. TROY : It is not reasonable because a few members miss their train for other members to be kept up all hours of the morning to do business. If members attend the House at 4

o'clock they should be able to get away at a quarter past 12. In regard to this railway proposal, it is my intention to support the Bill, but I have several objections to some features of the measure. I look upon the construction of a railway from Goomalling to Wongan Hills as part of a scheme for building a grand trunk railway to connect the Murchison Railway with the Eastern Railway at Northam. And I hope it will not be long delayed when this line will be pushed forward from Wongan Hills to connect with the Murchison Railway at Wuraga. This would save to the Murchison people from six to eight hours on the journey to Perth. They are now compelled to travel by a circuitous route over a private railway. But this would be obviated by the building of a line from Wuraga to Wongan Hills. I believe this railway will open up a belt of country which is rapidly being settled, and which, when developed, will tend to the greater prosperity of the State. I am assured that along the route there is a considerable amount of mining timber which is badly needed on the Murchison, and which would be available later on for the mines, and obtainable at a cheaper rate than is now paid for fuel on the Murchison because of the shorter route. The farmers taking up land in that area would have their natural market in the Murchison and East Murchison districts, because I hope the East Murchison field will be connected by a railway from Sandstone to Lawlers. I hope this agricultural country I speak of will be opened up by means of a railway right through at the earliest possible date. I give my support to this Bill because I recognise this country can only be opened up by means of railways, and because we have to pursue a vigorous policy in regard to these railways to bring about the happiest and speediest results. At the same time I have strong objections to the policy of the Government in regard to their manner of building these railways. I do not think the destination of this railway is the best one. I believe from the result of my inquiries that the railway will not serve

the best purpose by being constructed to the destination marked on the map, for the reason that the land at that destination is held in large areas, whereas if the railway were built to a certain point to the West it would run to a locality where there is a large number of small holders, and where the land is put to more legitimate purpose. In the country served by the line large areas have been taken up. The eyes of the country have been picked out by the holders of these large estates prior to the route being surveyed. That is one objection I have to the railway, and it is proved by the figures submitted by the Government accompanying the Bill which show that the resident occupiers number 80 persons, whereas on the Dowerin-Merredin route there are 85 occupiers.

Mr. Angwin: That is wrong; there are more there now.

Mr. TROY: The comparison is marked when it is pointed out that the land on the Dowerin-Merredin line alienated within 15 miles of the route amounts to 398,000 acres as against 493,700 acres alienated within 15 miles of the Goomalling-Wongan Hills line. Again, the holders of 4,000 acres and over hold 109,700 acres on the Goomalling-Wongan Hills route. Of course we are assured that 60 per cent. of this land is held by the Midland Railway Company. It is however land from which the Government will not secure revenue and which will be developed by the building of this railway.

The Premier: But you want to take the railway right up to their land. The further West you go the nearer you go to the Midland Company's land.

Mr. TROY: I am perfectly aware of that. I have gone into the matter during the last few days, and I find that on the route to which I think the railway could properly be diverted, there is a larger number of small areas than will be found where the railway as proposed will have its destination. Furthermore, there is a large number of large holdings further to the North. At the last election I pointed out we were pursuing a bad policy of allowing persons to take up large areas and hold them mostly

for speculative purposes. What I said at the last general election was absolutely true and cannot be denied. I have taken particular care since then to make further inquiries, and I have satisfied myself that my statements in regard to the taking up of large areas north of the line are correct. Again, there is a marked difference between the number of occupiers to be served by this line and the number to be served by the Boyup-Kojonup. While there are only 80 occupiers here there are 600, approximately, on the Boyup-Kojonup, showing, after all, either that the estates are very large or that a large number of holders do not live in that locality, and, therefore, little developmental work is being carried on. An excuse for no developmental work having been done may be that the people who own the areas have not facilities for getting their produce to market. I admit that is so, but still, I hold that the Government policy of settling lands and building railways is most absurd and cannot be in the best interests of the State. For instance, by their policy in opening up these lands they have been guilty of encouraging aggregations of large areas. Those areas are being developed, from what I can learn, with money borrowed from the Agricultural Bank. The railway when built with the people's money will increase the value of those estates, and the result will be that the bona fide settler will be shut out from settlement, so that later on, when land is desired, the Government will be compelled to pay to the owners of these large estates an increased value, which has arisen owing to the construction of the railway and the spending of Government funds in developing the land. The better policy to pursue would be for the officer to survey the railway route when surveying the land, and for the Government to see that the provisions of the Land Act are carried out in their entirety, no man being allowed to take up more than the maximum provided by the law. I looked up the regulations in the last *Government Gazette*, showing the number of leases to be forfeited for non-payment of rent, and I find that the name of Glow-

rey takes up one-half a column, and that the area aggregates nearly 8,000 acres of land. This sort of thing is going to be the curse of the country. It has already proved to be a curse, as shown by the fact that the Government recently brought in a Bill to repurchase estates; yet they are still pursuing the absurd policy of giving the land away, and building railways which are going to increase the value of the land which the Government will before long have to repurchase. That is what I have to say in opposition to the policy of the Government in regard to these railways. I know that what I advocate is rather a bold policy.

The Premier: You are bold, young man.

Mr. TROY: But it is the policy carried out in Canada, to a large extent. I think it may be carried out to advantage here. I have already spoken of the wisdom of having the railway route surveyed by the person who surveys the land.

The Premier: It does not necessarily follow that a land surveyor is a railway engineer.

Mr. TROY: He could mark out a route. I believe one has been carried out on this line by land surveyors, and that it runs north of the Wongan Hills. The railway should be constructed and then people would settle on the land in thousands, because they would at once have facilities for getting to market. The cost of the railway should be added to the land, with the result that such means would be provided that the settlers would be able to develop their land quickly, they would receive every encouragement by having access to market, and increased prosperity would soon pay off the cost of the railway and of the land. In addition to that, from the point of view of the Government, the cost of the railway being added to the land would soon be paid off, and the traffic that would run over it would return a four-fold profit. That would be a much better policy than the present one of allowing people to take up land for speculative purposes and shutting out those anxious to settle in a bona fide manner on the land. The policy

I outline is not an impossible one. If the country is adapted to settlement there can be no risk whatever in providing the route beforehand, while if it is not adapted the Government are not justified in putting the people on the land. If the Government do put people on the land which is not adapted for settlement then they are playing the confidence trick on them. That is all I have to say as to the railway. The Government policy is an absurd one, but I have to recognise that since the Government will not depart from it to-day, since the settlers in the locality must have facilities, and as I hope to see the railway extended north some day, I will give my support to the Bill as presented to the House. I have made my objections, and I feel strongly upon them. I hope the day will come when we shall no longer have these propositions put before us in the manner now adopted. The present system results in the building up of large estates, while the one I suggest would settle hundreds of people on the land. Two thousand acres, and in many cases 1,000 acres, are quite sufficient for any man to hold provided he is a bona fide settler and the land is good; while, if the land is no good, the Government have no business to build railways there. By adopting this policy the best course will be taken for developing the lands of the State.

Mr. BATH (Brown Hill): There is one thing I wish to say that the member for Mount Magnet has not stated, and that is that the admission made by the Premier the other night that these lines were proposed in his policy speech, but that they could not be introduced earlier because the information concerning them was not available, indicates that the Government included lines in their policy which they could not guarantee to members of this House.

The Premier: The permanent survey had not been completed.

Mr. BATH: The point is this. If the Government were prepared to undertake the line, before doing so they should satisfy themselves with the information at hand that the line is justified.

The Premier: We must get some idea what the cost is to be and we cannot get

that until a permanent survey has been completed.

Mr. BATH: Hon. members did not so much regard the question of the cost, but the main point upon which members give their judgment on railway proposals is as to whether the settlement, the quality of the land, and the prospects of the district, warrant the communication being given. My object in saying that is that these railway Bills should be submitted earlier to the House, and the information should be prepared in order that they might be submitted at an earlier date than has been done during the past two or three years. Whatever we may think of rushing through railway proposals and Estimates of expenditure at the end of the session, the public outside regard it as a scandal that we can press so much business into the tail end of the session because they say adequate discussion cannot be given to these matters. I protest against the way in which the business is jammed into the tail end of the session. There is no reason why we should not meet earlier, say in June, and get through our business in the better months of the year and rise at the end of November or early in December, and members would not then be called upon to sit during such hot weather as we are having, and while we are dealing with the most important business of the session. As far as this railway proposition is concerned I confess I have little knowledge of the district which is to be served by it. I am like other hon. members labouring under disabilities which prevent me from seeing as much of the country as I would desire. The principle disability is that we do not get sufficient remuneration to enable us to do that, and therefore we are compelled to take on trust the rather limited amount of information which is supplied to us in connection with these railway Bills. As the Premier has not spoken on this measure I would ask him to give some information which has not been supplied before, and that is with regard to some questions I asked in the House a few months ago where I pointed out that one of the persons referred to

by the member for Mount Magnet at the last election who took up land for speculative purposes had proved the contention of the hon. member by advertising this land for sale; the inducement held out being that the railway was passing through it. That was Mr. Schruth.

The Premier: The land was offered for sale after the man died.

Mr. BATH: No; not at that time.

Mr. Gordon: After Schruth died it was offered for sale.

Mr. BATH: At any rate it was advertised as unimproved, and the inducement was the construction of the railway. When this was mentioned previously the Premier said that he would inquire into it. It was stated at that time that this man had taken up this particular area in view of the proposal to build the railway.

Mr. George: He owned land at the terminus.

Mr. BATH: I am not aware of that. I am here to assist in passing money, and assist in providing railway communication for legitimate settlers and where legitimate cases are made out, but we should not encourage speculation in our land. We find that of the large holdings within 15 miles of the line, 60 per cent. are held by the Midland Company, and my reluctance with regard to the Bolgart railway was that such a large area of the land to be served by that railway was owned by the Midland Company; and we find that after this House passed the railway Bill, the Midland Company advertised a special sale of that land and secured good prices on the strength of the Bill which passed in this House for the construction of the railway. Some policy should have been devised by the Government before when they brought this railway Bill down by which they could have saved the State from expending money to build up the value of the Midland Company's land.

Mr. Gordon: Another secret purchase.

Mr. BATH: There are other ways of doing it. A betterment tax could have been applied in this case. The Premier must regret at the present time that no opportunity was given him for the in-

stitution of a betterment tax to prevent railways being constructed and adding to the speculative value of the land. Judging by the vote taken the other night, however, it is useless to urge any further opposition to the railway proposals.

Mr. W. PRICE (Albany): I intend with regard to this Bill to act as I did with the one previously dealt with by this House. I intend to oppose it for the reason that there are other districts more deserving of railway communication; and secondly I am not by any means satisfied with the information placed before the House that the construction of this railway is justified in the best interests of the State. I do not intend to speak at any length on the matter, but I certainly should be lacking in my duty to those I represent in this House were I not to enter my protest against the construction of a railway at a cost of £55,000 to suit the convenience of 80 holders of land.

Mr. George: There are not 80 there.

Mr. W. PRICE: I am taking what is given to us, and this is sufficient condemnation without going outside. Assuming it is correct that there are 80 people in the district, I find that the land alienated within 15 miles of the line, according to the printed sheet supplied to members, totals 493,700 acres, so that that land is split up into blocks of about 5,000 acres—in other words it appears to me that this line is being constructed not in the interests of the small settlers, but in the interests of large land monopolists. Moreover, if we take large holdings within 15 miles of the line, out of a total of 100,700 acres no less than 65,820 acres are held by the Midland Railway Company. Is this a fair proposition to put before the House? Are we asked as reasonable men to believe that such a proposal as this is in the interests of the country? Is it in the interests of the country that 80 people should have £55,000 of the public money spent upon them when we find that more than half of the land in that district has been alienated. The land alienated within 15 miles of the line is

493,000 acres, and the land open for selection within the same distance is 344,000 acres. I desire also to draw attention to the class of land in this locality. Under the heading of "classification of land" we find on this printed sheet that of first-class land there are 130,000 acres; of second-class 131,000 acres; and of third-class land 266,000 acres. More than double the quantity of land is regarded as third-class or land which is practically useless. One-quarter of the land is classed as first-class. Is this a fair proposition when we have hundreds or thousands of people in the State who need railway communication if they are to succeed? I have a report with regard to this district which is anything but satisfactory. I have heard it stated that men in high places are interested in this railway line; that it is not the bona fide settler who will receive the benefit, and that it will not conduce to any material increase in our agricultural products, but that it will conduce to the enlargement of the bank balances of certain large landed proprietors in this State. In those circumstances I certainly am opposed to the railway line, and I believe if this House were placed in possession of the full facts connected with railway proposal, in the interests of the State, and for the good name of the Assembly, members would vote against the proposal. I do not desire to name any of those who are interested in large estates in this district. Members can themselves secure that information; but I certainly consider that when a railway proposition is placed before members of this Assembly we should be sure that the best interests of the State are being served, and not the interests merely of one section of individuals. However, I know it is useless to attempt to block this measure. The Ministry, for reasons best known to themselves, have in this instance undoubtedly decided to do that which I say they would not have done if they considered the best interests of the State. Actuated as they are by a desire to help large land owners of the Midland Railway Company type they will force this measure through. Having voiced my protest against it I will

leave them to assist the monopolist, to assist the Midland Railway Company, and I trust the day will come when they will receive their reward from the people of the State whom they have, in this instance, victimised in the interests of this section of the community to whom I have referred. I certainly am opposed to the railway, and I regret there is not a majority in this Assembly of the same opinion as myself.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray): In connection with this particular proposed railway I have a few words to offer. I very much regret that at this time in the wrong day we are engaged in discussing a motion in which I think some particular issues lie. If this railway is carried along the route which is proposed by the Government, it will be one of the most glaring wrongs ever committed in this State. If ever a case came within my notice in which the interests of certain persons have been regarded and those of the bulk of the people disregarded, this is the worst I have seen in 20 years in Western Australia.

The Premier: Regarded by whom?

Mr. GEORGE: That we shall find out presently, I hope. The Minister who introduced this railway was very careful to show that his information as given to the House was gleaned from reports submitted to him. I have not seen those reports, I am not in a position to say whether or not the Minister's eye simply caught those matters which appealed to him, but I think from the information given to me I have the right to ask hon. members to listen to a few remarks. I knew nothing about this matter until travelling in a train about a week ago, when the conversation of a couple of persons in connection with this railway caused me to think a little. Subsequently I made some inquiries. We were led to believe by the Minister, who relies on his reports and against whom I have not the slightest intention to urge anything, that the project was all that could be desired. Either he did not size up the case, or the information submitted to him was not sufficiently thorough to allow him to form an accurate conception. The

Minister said that the land to the Eastward of the line was all that was lovely.

The Minister for Works: No, I said a lot of sand plain was there.

Mr. GEORGE: I will not misrepresent you; my memory is good, I have been complimented even by the editor of a newspaper on my memory. The hon. member said the rainfall was 15ins., tapering down to 10, or even less as it went eastward. He did not say that the 15ins. is to the Westward of the Wongan Hills, and that on the Eastward of the Wongan Hills it is 10ins. and tapers rapidly. I have here a map published by the Lands Department, in which the different qualities of the land are shown for some considerable distance. If hon. members will take this map and compare it with the map on the wall, or the map with the survey, they will find that every piece of land with the slightest claim to value has been selected and is held by someone in the State. It is most peculiar, and I cannot understand how the Minister for Lands, with his commercial acuteness and unimpeachable honesty could have permitted these selectors to pick out the only patches of any value. If you take a tracing of this map and lay it on that map on the wall you will find that every little bit of land of any value has been selected by someone or other. Let us search the names of these selectors and what do we find? We find three or four persons—they are within their rights in selecting the land—I do not urge that they are wrong even in pulling the wires—

The Premier: Pulling what wires?

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman knows.

The Premier: Speak out; you pride yourself on your fairness.

Mr. GEORGE: You will not have to complain of my fairness. But every hon. member knows what pulling the wires means. Using what influence they might possess.

The Premier: I will show what influence they possess.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member can do so, but he should not lose his temper, I have not lost mine.

The Minister for Works: You are getting near it.

Mr. GEORGE : The Minister for Works with his lordly haw-haw is almost as entertaining as the Minister for Lands. I want to point out to the House that these pieces of land have been picked out. Now if a railway is to go into any particular district, what do we want it to do ? We want it to serve the greatest number of people, the biggest majority of the people on the selected land. What do we find on the Wongan Hills—who owns this land ? We find a block marked “ T. T. Elliott.” We get a bit further and we find a couple of names, Kelsall and then Twine. A little bit further down, a block in the name of someone that looks like Twine, but I do not think it can be Twine ; I am going to make further inquiries about that. That gentleman has got his land all round the best water hole in the district ; it is entirely enclosed by his selection. Then there is not another selection until you get up to Sharman’s ; I do not know who he is. I made inquiries but without success. Now, with the exception of these, the eyes of the place have been picked out by the late Mr. Schruth. There is a lot of land selected on the North of the Wongan Hills, but whether the line goes to the East or to the West it does not make much difference to those particular blocks. When we get to the Westward what do we find ? On the West of the Wongan Hills 60 blocks have been selected, comprising 50,000 acres. Those 60 blocks, if my memory be correct, are principally held, one block to a selector. We will say 60 selectors, or, to be safe, say 40 selectors. Now I will give the names of some of the people settled there on the West, the side the line should go. On the East side there are three or four speculative blocks, little or no work having been done upon them. On the West side the holders of the 60 blocks are principally men who have come down from the goldfields, who have been induced to select this land. They are the class of men we want to get. One good thing the land policy has done has been to induce the people of the goldfields to come into the agricultural districts. In my district we have two settlers from Comet Vale ; they made their money there and have come down

to the South-West and proved two of the best settlers we have. Therefore, if we find these people to the West are genuine settlers, not land dummies, not speculators, but people who are there by the strength of their muscle surely we should have more consideration for them. There are 25 settlers living on the blocks. There is Murray and family, Brown and family, Lincoln Phillips, Shields, Hack, Jacques, and others.

I o'clock a.m.

Mr. GEORGE : These are names that can be verified ; these are actual facts ; these are men taking up land and settling on it, yet we are asked to pass a railway that will be of little service to them. In addition to these 25 settlers, most of whom have their wives and families with them, every month there are further people selecting land there, and they come from the goldfields, having accumulated a little capital to settle there, and to prove that they are the sort of men we desire to have on the land. Yet, there is a proposition that this railway should go to the East of the Wongan Hills where the rainfall is only 10 inches and is tapering off, and where it will be of no use to people living on the West side of the hills where there is a rainfall of 15 inches. The settlers to the West of the Wongan Hills were exercised as to where the line should go, and a deputation came down and saw the Premier, and afterwards they made up their minds—they had been told, so I am informed, not by the Premier ; he is not the man to make such a statement : he is beyond suspicion—they were told there was no chance of getting the railway on the West side, and they had to make up their minds as to what should be done. That being so Mr. Hancy endeavoured to get the Government to have the line extended five miles on the Eastern side of the Wongan Hills so that it would terminate in Mr. Sharman’s block. A letter received by the member for Irwin will show that. The hon. member showed me the letter yesterday. These people said that if they could not get the railway on the Western side, they must, as an alternative, ask the Government to continue it five miles on the Eastern side. The contention will be

made that there is a gap in the hills over which the people can cart, but I am told that this gap is so steep that it is impossible to cart anything like a decent load over it. But where is the necessity for carting, when by a deviation of the railway to the Western side of the hills the holders of these 60 blocks can be inconvenienced—and these blocks can grow wheat. With the plans laid on the table we have very little chance of judging what the railway is like. Formerly there was always a plan with the sections given, but now we have the barest particulars, simply a red line on the map, and we have to accept the ipse dixits of the Minister. I do not wish to see a wrong perpetrated, as will be perpetrated if this Bill passes in its present form. It is true there is provision for a deviation of five miles on either side of the route, but in this case a five-mile deviation goes right through the centre of a peak where it is absolutely impossible to carry the railway.

The Premier: The Government will accept an amendment to make it 15 miles or 20 miles if you like.

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier need not get his hair off.

The Premier: You insinuate that as the result of fixing a limit of five miles it will be impossible to bring the line to the West of the hills. I say we are prepared to accept a limit of 15 miles or 20 miles.

Mr. GEORGE: That is where the Premier's eminently practical common sense comes in. I do not as a rule make insinuations, and I regret the Premier talks about them. The Minister for Works talked about an unlimited wheat area, or words to that effect. I suppose he got it from his report. The remark is probably correct if he carries his wheat area beyond the range of influence of this railway on the Eastern side. But, outside the range of 15 miles is said to be beyond fair carting distance. However, this land with the exception of blocks of ti-tree and salmon gum is not wheat-growing land; it will not grow wheat, and it is useless for any argument to be made that the railway is justified by the land on this particular Eastern side. If the line could go through Elliott's or

thereabouts, swerving to the West and then to the North, it would satisfy the settlers there. Independent of any letters received by the member for Irwin, or by the Premier, or by the Minister for Lands, there is a petition so I am informed on its way down signed by nearly every settler on the Western side to get the line to the Western side of the hills. These people were told when they came down some months ago—I suppose by someone in authority—that it was ridiculous for them to suppose they would get the railway on the Western side, and that they would have to go for it on the Eastern side or they would not get a railway at all.

The Premier: Will you give us the names?

Mr. GEORGE: I will when I come to the point. Another argument that may be made is that should the Bolgart railway be extended it will clash with a line to the Western side of the hills. Hon. members who know the country can tell me whether I am right when I say that if the Bolgart railway were extended it must deviate to the Westward, because otherwise there would be 20 miles of sand plain for it to cross. This cannot be done, so that an extension of the Bolgart line would give advantage to the Midland Company's lands. What matters it to the State if a line advantages the Midland Company's lands or not? Does it matter whether the company settle people on the land or the Government do it? What the State wants is settlers.

Mr. O'Loughlen: We do not want to tip the money into their coffers.

Mr. GEORGE: While we may be desirous of avoiding that, we do not want to stop land settlement, and stop tipping money into our own coffers. The people at present on the West of the Wongau Hills go to Mogumber on the Midland Railway for their stores, because the roads are more practicable than those to Goomalling. I do not care who owns the land; it all belongs to the State. It does not matter whether it is private ownership or anything else; the land has to contribute taxes to the State.

Mr. Troy: That is humbug. You tax them and you will find out who owns it

Mr. GEORGE: I want to see more land taxed; I want to see every piece of land occupied, and when the land tax comes along the revenue will be so much that the tax will not make people squeal because it will be so comparatively small that people will be satisfied with it. The Minister for Works said this railway would open up an extensive stretch of good wheat country for dry farming. But the Minister has either not digested his information properly, or it has not been given to him properly, because the bulk of the land for wheat-growing lies to the West of the railway, and not to the East. There is no question about this; the land to the West has a rainfall of about 15 inches. The rain which would otherwise go to the East is intercepted by the range. Another thing he told us was that extra facilities in the way of station buildings and connections would have to be provided which would add to the cost of the railways, and that this sum would be something like £30 a mile extra. There are 40 miles, consequently the extra cost would be £1,200. I would like to know how many stations there are to be. One cannot tell from the map the number of stations, but the items necessary to make up this extra amount of £30 a mile would assuredly be many more than are really required. For £30 a mile the line could be supplied with such conveniences as anyone could reasonably expect to have for the work for the time being. The Minister said he had a conversation with one of the inspectors who had told him that for 40 miles from the Wongan Hills which will be the terminus of the railway, he had seen country which was very much above the average. I do not dispute that, but whether the line goes east or west, the country 40 miles north of the terminus will be equally attended to. Further on he says, "The present settlement consists of works of ringbarking, clearing, fencing, and stock raising, to some extent, while there is also provision for water supplies." It would be very interesting to know from the Minister where there is any ringbarking, how much clearing and fencing has been done, and how many stock are raised to the east of

this line? If I am correctly informed, all this work is being done to the west of the line.

The Premier: You are only referring to the most northern portion of the area.

Mr. GEORGE: That is the only part I care twopence about. The Minister's informant stated also, "Around the Wongan Hills itself to the south and east the country is excellent. Of course there is a sand plain which is poor but the major portion is cultivable." It is not cultivable. He also says "The crops around the Wongan Hills are very good." That means all around, but there are no crops on the eastern side, and very few on the north, while the south is too far down to be affected.

[*Mr. Daglish took the Chair.*]

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister's informant does not say south of Wongan Hills, but that there are no crops on the eastern side.

The Minister for Works: Are there any on the western?

Mr. GEORGE: Yes.

The Minister for Works: This statement is correct.

Mr. GEORGE: The man said "The sand plain is poor, but the major portion is cultivable. The crops around Wongan Hills are very good." There are no crops round there for they are all on the one side. The statement goes on: "And to the east equal to anything I have seen before." What particular sort of brains did that inspector have when he went round there. He cannot have seen much for I am told there are practically no crops, if any, on the east side.

The Minister for Works: Have you been up there?

Mr. GEORGE: I am told there are no crops to the east.

The Minister for Works: Who told you; the man in the train?

The Premier: The inspector told the Minister.

Mr. GEORGE: Well he must have made a mistake. So far as putting the line through, I am agreeable for it to be done in order to look after the small selectors 100 miles further off, if the Government can find the money. But when

they get to this point of Eliot's or even lower down it should be a case for the most careful inquiry as to whether the line should go east or west. If the information given me is correct, and I believe it is, for the gentleman who told me is a very honourable man and well-known—

The Minister for Works: Has he any land to the west?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not know; he may have. A deviation of 5 miles is of no use if an attempt is made to carry the line westward. Therefore, if the Government are prepared to increase the deviation to say, 9 or 10 miles and not carry the line on further than to a point which will enable them thoroughly to investigate the west before constructing the railway, I have no objection. What I am pleading for is this. There are 60 selectors on the west of the line while there are only three selectors on the east, all of whom are practically land-grabbers. This is the information given to me. The Government can search out and find whether it is correct but let them give a fair undertaking that they will not carry the line east until they are thoroughly satisfied they are doing no wrong to these 60 settlers. That is a reasonable proposition. If I have put it in an unreasonable way, I regret it. I do not know whether the Minister will give me that assurance, but so far as I am concerned, I have done my duty. If I cannot get the assurance I must try, however, and convince the House.

The Premier: You want to go 5 miles off the line, but the line is already 10 miles further than I intended.

Mr. GEORGE: I have not seen the district myself, but I know the honour of the gentleman who gave me the information, and I am sure that information is correct. There are 60 selectors on the western side. There is a town site there and a big lake, and why should they be put for all time to the trouble of carting their crops over the Wongan Hills when the line should go to the westward? In order to test the feeling of the House I should like to move, "That the route of this railway from the 30 miles—"

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot take any amendment affecting the route

of a railway at present. The question is the second reading.

Mr. GEORGE: Then I can move to throw the Bill out.

The Premier: You cannot even do that. You can only vote against it.

Mr. GEORGE: Does the Premier mean to say that the powers of the House in an important Bill like this are to be confined to the question of voting against the second reading? Is it not possible for a member to move in any other direction?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member must discuss the second reading.

Mr. GEORGE: I am discussing it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You must not discuss the remark the Premier has made.

Mr. GEORGE: With all due respect to the Chair the sooner a supply of muzzles are ordered to put on the Premier, the better, for while he makes interjections I will reply so long as I can; and with all due respect to the Chair, I would ask you Mr. Deputy Speaker what is the constitutional course for me to follow? If there is one let us know it. With regard to this question—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the hon. member want me to answer his question?

Mr. GEORGE: Yes; if you will.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is "That the Bill be now read a second time." It is open for an hon. member either to support it or to vote against it, or to move an amendment on it, but the only form an amendment can take is in regard to the exact time at which the second reading shall take place.

Mr. GEORGE: Then it throws on me the distasteful task of moving "That the Bill be read this day six months" which I do not want to do. Surely there is some procedure by which I can bring forward what I want. I am moving in this matter because I consider it to be my duty.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is the hon. member moving?

Mr. GEORGE: I desire to get an assurance in connection with the route of this railway which, if built as is suggested, would be a public disgrace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member must wait then until the House is in Committee.

Mr. GEORGE: Well I can only give the House information on the question now. I see that there are members now in the Chamber who were not here when I was speaking before, so I will try and give them my opinions on this question and repeat what I said before.

Mr. Heitmann: Go on, I have missed it. I was out.

Mr. Bolton: And if the hon. member goes out and misses it again he will not miss much.

[A pause ensued.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the hon. member does not proceed with his speech I shall put the question.

Mr. GEORGE: I intend to proceed, but my desire is to avoid repetition.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot retain possession of the floor unless he speaks.

Mr. GEORGE: I shall not say very much more. I shall just repeat for the benefit of those who were not here when I gave this information previously, that on the eastern side of the line there are five selectors, on the western side there are 60 blocks selected; and there are 25 settlers actually there with their wives and families, who are doing good work. The rainfall is heavy on the western side; it is not so on the eastern side. On the western side there is good land; on the eastern side there are only patches of good land. At the present time there is a petition which has been signed by 60 settlers on its way down for presentation to this House, asking that the line shall be taken to the west of Wongan Hills. I sincerely trust that the Government will agree to an inquiry being made as to the advisableness of the deviation. That is all I have to say.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): With regard to the line under discussion at the present time, the desirability of constructing it was brought under notice a considerable time ago, and certain figures in support were submitted by a deputation which was introduced by the member for the district, Mr. Quinlan.

The deputation, which waited upon me, pointed out that there were many settlers along the proposed route, and it was impossible for them to profitably cart wheat for more than 15 miles; they also pointed out that a large number of settlers were beyond Wongan Hills and would be served, and that all these settlers had improved their holdings and had the country ready for crop as soon as the railway was constructed. The figures submitted by the members of the deputation showed that up to August of last year 180,000 acres had been taken up; 60,000 acres improved, and 30,000 acres cleared. A petition was presented bearing the signatures of 110 different settlers, who had taken up land some distance from Goomalling, and it also gave particulars of the acres held, the acres cleared, and the acres improved, and the length of time they had been on the land. In replying to that deputation, I stated that I was acquiring information with regard to the character of the country in order to ascertain whether the project would be justified. I also stated that the Minister for Agriculture had taken an interest in the proposal, and they asked that I should take the opportunity of accompanying the Minister through that country. It was shown that the official record of the rainfall proved to be well up to the mark and that in some parts of that country it had reached 18 inches. As far as the timber was concerned, it was pointed out that there was a good deal of raspberry jam there, and, as hon. members know, where this timber grows it is possible to grow wheat.

Mr. Bath: It grows right away into the goldfields.

The PREMIER: The surveyor reported that the railway would hug the present track between Goomalling and the terminus, and the engineering difficulties were not to be considered an important factor.

Mr. George: What was the date of the deputation?

The PREMIER: The 27th June, 1908. In addition to the information which was then supplied in the petition it was shown that the rainfall was from 12 to 17 inches and that it extended over a period of

seven months. When this line was decided upon the instructions given to the surveyor were to survey the line north along the route referred to; a distance of from 30 to 35 miles. The instructions were carried out, and it was decided to make a survey to the 35-mile post, that is five miles on this side of the present terminus. A letter was received from the Wongan Hills progress association, in which it was stated that they had unanimously decided to request that the proposed railway line from Goomalling to the terminus, which was Block 1,355, should be extended a further distance of five miles to Block 1,450. It would then reach a point opposite the surveyed route and would save settlers miles of carting. The association mentioned that settlement had taken place from 20 to 25 miles ahead of Block 1,450, and that if the railway was taken to Block 1,450 it would then be a distance of 15 miles from most of the settlers. Already the land is being cleared in all directions. Everyone is preparing the land for wheat growing and with the advent of the railway this district will become one of the most flourishing in the State. The member for Irwin next wrote and stated that the Wongan Hills settlers were most anxious to get the extension of five miles added to the authorised survey. On the 24th September last the survey was to be made to the 35 miles, that is five miles less than we are asking authority to construct at the present time, and it would have remained there but for the request for the further distance. If hon. members will turn to the plan they will see that a reserve was made at the 35 miles, and it was intended to cut that up as a townsite. That was the last that was heard of the matter until the letter was sent in through the member for the district, and I wrote to Mr. Quinlan stating that I had already intimated which railway Bills would be brought down, and that among them was that for the construction of the line to Wongan Hills. I desire to emphasise the fact that on the 24th September the terminus decided upon was at the 35 miles, and that a reserve was made there for subdivision as a townsite. The member for Murray has taken exception

to the route of the railway and, as a matter of fact, I think it was about a month ago that two or three gentlemen from that district waited on me in the House and suggested that consideration be given to the advisableness of deviating in a north-westerly direction from about the 35-mile terminus through what looked like a gorge of hills. There was a break-away between the two ranges and it looked at first sight that it would be possible to effect a survey from the 35-mile in a north-westerly direction. I intimated to several members of Parliament who had interviewed me in connection with this matter that I would ask Mr. Muir whether it would be possible to make a deviation in this direction in order that we might make provision in the Bill for the deviation, so that if it were determined to take the line in a north-westerly direction it would not interfere with the passage of the Bill. I have seen Mr. Muir, and he has pointed out to me that it would be practically impossible to deviate in a north-westerly direction. If any deviation were made it would have to be from a point five miles further south, and would trend in a north-north-westerly direction, and then due north, and so towards the point the hon. member has referred to. I am speaking from memory, but the objection Mr. Muir had to taking a westerly line was that the route surveyed goes centrally through good country. In his report he said he would strongly protest against any material alteration of the route suggested.

Mr. George: Has Mr. Muir been there?

The PREMIER: Certainly; several times. He further stated in his report that to deviate to the West would throw the line out of direction and increase the cost of construction. The settlers on either side, he said, would be within five or six miles of the railway, but that any deviation westerly would bring the railway nearer to the Midland Company's property. To this he added that it would be better to increase the value of the Crown land than of private land.

Mr. George: The map does not show any good country, anyhow.

The PREMIER: Mr. Muir went on to say that as the objective will be to junction with the Murchison-Cue railway, a generally Northerly direction should be maintained. As a practical railway man the hon. member will realise that that is a point to be taken into consideration. That is to say, if it be found that to serve these people we should go in a North-Westerly direction at the cost of sharp grades and sharp curves, it would be advisable to keep the line where it is if the ultimate objective is the Mullewa-Cue line.

Mr. George: Why sell land to settlers and deceive them?

The PREMIER: Most of the settlers would be within five miles of a railway.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Down at Wandering they are 40 miles away from a railway.

The PREMIER: A letter I have received from a settler on the West side states that if the railway were brought to block 1450 it would then reach a point opposite a surveyed road through a gorge in the hills, and would save the settlers miles of cartage over a rough track around the hills. That is from Mr. H. Murray, who has a holding on the West side of the line.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Murray communicated with me recently and appealed to me to have the line taken to the Westward.

The PREMIER: Yes; that is his desire. He would like it to go there if it were possible to do so.

Mr. George: What date was that letter?

The PREMIER: Twenty-fourth April.

Mr. George: I have one dated 10th July from the same gentleman.

The PREMIER: Mr. Muir in his communication stated that he would strongly protest against any material alteration in the route suggested. The Government are prepared to accept in Committee an alteration in regard to the limit of deviation. Instead of five miles we would be prepared to make it 10 or 15. Surely that should be sufficient evidence that so far as we are concerned it is only a question of getting the line in the best place. Taking everything into consideration, that is, the fact that it must ultimately con-

nect with the Murchison goldfields line, and that it would be advisable to, as far as possible, adhere to the general direction, I should say if it were found possible to deviate lower down without any increase to the length, or without having to adopt heavy grades, that proposal should be considered; although, as I say, Mr. Muir points out that the farther the line goes to the West the farther will it be getting into the Midland Company's land, and improving their land instead of improving Crown lands to the Eastward. Now, surely I have given evidence to the hon. member that in September, when I received this letter, the survey of the line was not made beyond 35 miles and that it was intended to stop there.

Mr. George: I am not going to dispute a single word the Premier tells me.

The PREMIER: I am only emphasising the point that in September that was to have been the terminus of the railway; and had we not been approached by these people it would have remained there, and the Bill introduced would have been to construct the line to 35 miles instead of 40 miles as now shown on the plan. In regard to the remarks made by other hon. members, I am afraid that I listened so intently to the member for Murray that I neglected to give consideration to any other views. But I would like to point out that of large holdings over 4,000 acres there is only a total of 34,000 acres. Of this the Midland Railway Company hold 28,660 acres, while one other family own 5,000, thus making a total of 34,000 acres. The Slater family have no less than 4,000 acres under crop at the present time. Surely that may be taken as an indication of the progressive character of the people in that district.

Mr. Bath: That is near Goomalling.

The PREMIER: Yes; about seven miles out.

Mr. Keenan: How many people North of the 30-mile have any crops?

The PREMIER: I should say those who have crops would be on the West side of the hills.

Mr. Keenan: Then, there are no crops at all on the East?

The PREMIER: I have only been 35 miles along the line, so I cannot speak from my own knowledge. It would still allow for a deviation to be made if we extended the limit of five miles, but Mr. Muir is of opinion that any deviation could not be made from the 35 miles but would have to be made some five miles further South. I consider the line, if built, will be a payable proposition. From the knowledge I have of Mr. Muir and his experience, extending over many years in this State, I know him to be a gentleman qualified as an engineering surveyor, and one who also has had an opportunity of making comparisons of various railway propositions in the State. Yesterday Mr. Muir personally assured me that he considered this proposal one of the best brought before Parliament.

Mr. JACOBY (Swan): The discussion that has arisen regarding the prospective merits of various localities to be served by this line only emphasises the suggestion I made last year, that when discussing these railway Bills some committee should be appointed in order to make a thorough investigation, and give a report to the House in regard to the merits of any proposed line. In fact on a previous railway Bill it was proposed that a select committee should be appointed to consider it. However, I voted against the appointment of that select committee for the reason that I considered a select committee was not the best tribunal to be appointed to give the information necessary. But I firmly believe that the time has arrived when it becomes necessary that we should have some sort of standing committee on railways, not necessarily a political committee, but a committee composed of experts as far as railways and the quality of land are concerned, who could give an independent report to the House. I have very little hesitation in believing that all the lines proposed to date have been thoroughly justified. But we are going on with so many lines that presently, in a year or two, we may reach a stage reached in other parts of Australia where political lines have been built for political reasons. I want to see the mem-

bers of this House and the Government protected from a proposition of that sort. All proposals for the building of lines should be submitted to a committee of some description for a report for the consideration of Parliament. I am uneasy in my mind as to whether I am justified in voting for this line after what I have heard during the debate. If along one route we have 60 people to be served, and on the other side we have something like a dozen people, it will require some strong reason to induce me to vote for the line to serve six or seven people only. Though I am not prepared at this stage to say I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill, I would like to have the assurance that a member of the Government, preferably the Premier, will visit the district and investigate the merits of the proposed deviation; and if that assurance is given I shall be content to trust the decision arrived at by whatever Minister makes the visit. It would relieve me from the uneasiness I now feel in voting for this line.

2 o'clock, a.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell): Unnecessary heat has been brought into the discussion of this measure. A measure of this kind should be considered calmly, otherwise injustice may be done. I admit at once that the land to the West of the Wongan Hills is better than that to the East. In company with His Honour the Speaker I visited the district some 18 months ago and looked over the country. We were there some days. It has been suggested to-night there is no good land to the East of the line. That is wrong. Taking the first 30 miles from Goomalling, the bulk of the good land is to the East of the line. There are a good many settlers, and a great number of them are new settlers with comparatively small holdings. After passing the 30-mile peg it is true the land to the East of the Wongan Hills is not first-class, though there are patches of good country. The objective of this line must sooner or later be some point on the Cue Railway, and in the circumstances it is necessary that the surveyors should decide as to the side of the Wongan range on which the line should go.

The Nugadong district, where we are cutting up land, can only be served by an extension of the Wongan Hills railway. It seems to me that the engineers might be asked to clear up this matter. If we can get to the west of the Wongan Hills from a point on the present survey, say at 30 miles, I am prepared to admit better land will be served. There will be engineering difficulties, but that is for the surveyors to decide; it is for them to decide whether the line can get away again from the 40-mile peg on the west of the hills so as to be extended to the north. When we visited the district we were met by the selectors, and were conducted through the gorge referred to. A cart road can be made through that gorge. True the country is soft, but it would be easy to make a road. If the line were to the west of the hills there would be settlement on the east of the hills, and there must be traffic over that gorge, so that a road will have to be made. We were conducted through the pass with the idea of having a road made to the point to which the survey has been made. I am only desirous of being helpful to all the settlers of the State. I have no interest in the locality; I have never held the slightest interest in it; I own not an acre of land there, and I have not put a penny into the land there. The member for Murray will believe that.

Mr. George: If you had answered my question previously it would have been all right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would have answered it if the hon. member had pronounced the name correctly. Mr. Sharman has worked for me for many years, and I am only too glad to say I know him; he is certainly a good settler; he is a first-class, honourable man whom no one would be ashamed to have as a friend. I had no need to tell the hon. member I did not know Mr. Sharman. It would be inferred from what the hon. member said to-night that I had a special interest in the district. I have not. I have some interest in the settlers there, and I am ready to admit that if the line could run to the western side of the hills I would be glad to see it there. I was told by the surveyor that

it would be necessary to swing out west from a point much nearer to Goomalling than the 30-mile peg, and if that were necessary the proposition would not be feasible, as not only would the land be poor, but it would be getting near to the Midland Company's land, and we would be leaving to the east many settlers who have been induced to go there to take up Government land. In regard to the merits of the country, no better proposition has been placed before the House. I know something about the country, and I know there is splendid land, or as much good land to the east of the line as there is to the west, taking the whole length of the line. For the first 30 miles the railway could not be better placed; and if it is impossible to get to the west side of the hills from the 30-mile peg and impossible to get out again from the west side in a northerly direction, it would not be advisable to make the deviation suggested. However, it is not for me to say a route cannot be obtained, but we must keep in view the future extension, for every one of these lines we put down will have to be extended. We are now engaged in cutting up land to the north of this line. There is a fine stretch of country extending for 150 miles which will be served by an extension of this line, so that it is necessary the engineers' advice should be followed when a decision is being arrived at as to where the present proposition should terminate.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. KEENAN (Kalgoorlie): The Minister for Lands shares the view that the west side of the range is the best route for the railway from the point of view of accommodating the settlers, that is, from the 30-mile peg. The objection taken is that there may be some engineering difficulties. It seems to me, if it is a fact, as apparently it is, that a line to the West would serve infinitely better country and more settlers, these engineering difficulties could have been reported on, and we should have been given definite information as to whether they are in reality or only in imagination, that is whether they can be overcome. It is rather absurd Parliament

attempting to solve the question on the supposition of difficulties that may exist or may not, but which are suggested as possibilities. The information placed before members should have entirely covered that ground, and made it clear whether we could construct the line West of the hills or whether the engineering difficulties precluded the possibility of carrying out the line in the direction it is admitted will serve the largest number of settlers, and the better class of land. Vague talk has been introduced that if we go to the West we will serve the Midland Company's land. I have yet to learn that the settlers on the Midland Company's land are not Western Australian settlers and do not deserve the same means of marketing their produce.

Mr. Scaddan: Is their land settled?

Mr. KEENAN: That is also where information is lacking. If the land is held locked up for a sale, it might well be that we should stay our hand; but on the other hand is it sufficient warrant to hold our hand because it is the Midland Company's land? It would be ridiculous. If there are settlers there, they are just as much entitled to help as any other part of the State. It is another illustration of the difficulty of dealing adequately and justly with propositions of this character; they are merely thrown before members with the information Ministers have at their disposal, and with no direct information as to the justice or expediency of any proposal. I am not going to cover ground covered on other railway proposals. The vote taken already we must presume, so far as the present Parliament is considered, to be final; and that being so, the only assurance we are entitled to ask on this Bill is that the line will not be constructed beyond the 30 miles except to the west of the hills, unless the engineering difficulties are such as to prevent it; because I take it from the statement of the Minister for Lands that if these engineering difficulties do not exist there is no reason why the line should not go to the West of the hills. That undertaking I suppose is all in the circumstances we can

ask for. It is to my mind in no sense a satisfying method of dealing with proposals of this character, but apparently it is the only one open to us at the present stage. I should like before the second reading is carried that there should be a definite undertaking that, unless the engineering difficulties prevent the line being carried West from the 30 miles, it will be carried West and so on with its future progress when Parliament consider an extension is advisable.

Mr. FOULKES (Claremont): I would not have risen at this late hour to speak on this Bill were I not extremely anxious to see that we should have a standing committee to deal with these railways.

Mr. Gordon: You never thought of it on that South-Western railway.

Mr. FOULKES: I have always advocated it, and repeatedly. It is not the first time the question has been raised in Parliament. I remember when Mr. George Leake was Premier it was part of his platform to make provision of this kind, and I believe a Bill passed through another place, but unfortunately no further steps were taken.

Mr. Gordon: I think he dropped it because he found it was not possible, or was not suitable in the other States.

Mr. FOULKES: I do not think that was the reason. I know seven or eight years ago members of Parliament were strongly of opinion that it was highly necessary a committee should be appointed, not to consist of members of Parliament, but to consist of outside officials so that full opportunity could be given for getting information in regard to the construction of railways. The chief reason advocated for having that committee was that civil servants, engineers and inspectors of land, should come up for examination and give full information. This evening the Premier read a report made by Mr. Muir, an engineer occupying a high position in the department, and in doing so rightly drew attention to the fact that the officer was a man of high standing, and that his opinion should be listened to at all times. I know that on one occasion during the last four years Mr. Muir recommended a

certain railway route, but Parliament departed from it. I am anxious to have a committee appointed so as to put this man to the test of a cross-examination. The line I refer to was that running between Katanning and Kojonup. Mr. Muir stated publicly that he was strongly in favour of a certain route for the construction of that railway. If we had a standing committee they would deal with these railways. In the case in question Mr. Muir could have given evidence before that committee, and if a standing order committee existed now they could have dealt with the question of this railway. Mr. Muir would have been called before them and could have stated the objections from an engineering point of view to the suggested route. If the committee were not satisfied with the evidence another engineer could have been called, and the greatest possible assistance in arriving at a determination would have been given, not only to members of Parliament, but also to Ministers. The appointment of such a committee would take a great deal of responsibility off Ministers' shoulders. Most Ministers are anxious that the right route should be selected, but they have now to leave it to outsiders to give them their information. Some of those outsiders may know very little about the matter, with the result that the building of certain lines has subsequently to be regretted. I hope that Ministers, during recess, will come to the conclusion that it is time to have a committee of this kind appointed.

Mr. GORDON (Canning): In order to get to the westward of the Wongan Hills it would be necessary for the engineers to deviate considerably from the proposed route. The total deviation would be something like 20 miles.

Mr. George: Only three miles; I have measured it.

Mr. GORDON: It seems to me a good deal more than that. It may be three miles to the west, but how many miles would it be for the line again to turn in the direction it is necessary that it should go? After taking the deviation it would be necessary for the line to get out of the hills again, and that could not be done

without a considerable distance being traversed. The member for Murray emphasises the fact that while the rainfall is 15 inches on the west of the Wongan Hills it is only 10 inches on the east. He did not argue that point very plainly, for he did not say whether the line of demarcation occurred at the foot of the hills, or whether there was a 15-inch rainfall on one side of the hills and a 10-inch rainfall on the other. All he did was to say the rainfall was 15 inches to the west and 10 inches to the east. Are we to believe that a rainfall of 15 inches exists right up to the foot of the hills, and that just on the other side there is a drop of 5 inches?

Mr. Bath: The hills form a great attraction to rainfall.

Mr. GORDON: My experience is that when one gets to the Wongan Hills, especially from the Midland Railway, the country is very badly watered. Although the country on the west side is better than that on the east, still, on the latter side, it is very much easier to get water. It can be procured at a depth of from 5 to 30 feet. This ability to get a supply exists east of the hills for hundreds of miles. After all, I am inclined to think from my knowledge of the country that there is a lesser rainfall on the east side, but there is a much better chance there of getting water for stock than on the west side; consequently I would sooner be on the east than the west side.

Mr. George: What is the country like? Sand plain?

Mr. GORDON: I would sooner have sand plain with water than better country with no water. If I were taking up land I would much sooner be on the east side with an assured supply of water for stock than on the west. There is a much better chance of making a living there. From the lay of the country I think the line is made for cheapness and that the objective has been taken into consideration by the surveyor. I feel sure that whatever inquiry is made it will be proved that the surveyors were right in the route they took. This is not the first controversy with regard to agricultural lines. Hardly one line has been proposed that there has not been some discussion about. Have

any of the lines we have constructed proved to be failures? Is it not probable that if Parliament had appointed a committee to decide upon these lines some of them would have been failures? I would sooner trust to the knowledge of the engineers than to a select committee of Parliament. Regardless of the fact that years ago it was thought wise by the Leake Government to have a select committee as to public works generally, so far as my memory goes the measure was not brought before the House, as inquiries made with reference to this system of dealing with public works in the other States did not prove satisfactory. Years ago in South Australia there was a so-called works committee, but that was done away with. I do not think any good will be achieved by having a select committee to deal with these works while we have our engineers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): I just wish to say a few words in reply in connection with this matter which has cropped up, more especially on the remarks of the member for Murray, who appears to have got into his mind that there is something wrong in a survey of this kind. I am sure members will believe me when I say that I do not know an individual selector on the route of this railway. I have no personal knowledge of anyone owning land there, and I have not been advised to assist any selector, either on the east or the west side of the hills. I will tell members that I object to an alteration of the route, although I may say at once that I am not wedded to any special direction. My principal objection to an alteration is because I see on this map that the whole of the plan marked by a red line is the Midland Railway Co.'s property, and I do not want to carry this line any nearer that property than I can help. We have already been obliged to construct one railway through that land, that is the Bologart railway, which was opened the other day, and I say at once that where we can carry railways through Crown lands so that they may be settled, it is of much more advantage to the State than to carry them through a private company's land. That is a strong reason why we should

adhere to the present route. There are other reasons, and one was referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie. That member stated that information should have been supplied by the engineers as to why they should not go to the west of the hills. No one imagined that such information would be required. The surveyor is told to use his best judgment, and to survey the land in the best possible way to get the most satisfactory route for the construction of the railway. He ran his line to the Wongan Hills on lines north and south. Naturally the surveyor will not deviate to go right round the spur of the hills if he can go straight on in a central direction. Again, his objective is to open up country there very much farther north than he is going now. He would not spend weeks and months trying to get a passage through hills 200 or 300 feet high if he can go straight on and miss the hills. At the same time if he could strike a spot that opened through the hills in order to bring settlers within 5 or 10 miles of the proposed route he would naturally do so.

Mr. George: Settlers cannot cart to the railway over the hills.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no knowledge of that. It is reasonable to expect that an engineer would not report on a difficult route when there was no reason for him to go out of his way to take the railway through the hills. It seems to me that the proper course, so far as the engineers are concerned, has been followed. They have kept the most direct central route they could get, which served the best lands they came across, therefore, they took the route set out in the Bill. True, the settlers living at the back in the corner have not the railway brought to their doors, but they are within reasonable distance of a railway.

Mr. Johnson: With a wall between.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a gorge there through which it is said they can get a road.

Mr. George: My opinion is that they cannot cart there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Murray is giving me an opinion he obtained from two gentlemen

in a railway train. One of the gentlemen, according to his profession, would speak what he believed to be the truth.

Mr. George: There is a petition on the way through.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That reverend gentleman has, I believe, an interest in this very locality as a selector of lands and naturally would pump into the member for Murray all the arguments he could think of to try and get the railway to his very door. I do not blame him for that, but I do say this, that the hon. member should not come here and expect me to accept those gentlemen's arguments in favour of the route he suggests.

Mr. George: You are only guessing about the reverend gentleman.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Will the hon. member say there is no reverend gentleman.

Mr. George: There are half a score of them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know something about it and more, perhaps, than the hon. member thinks. Is it reasonable to create all this storm and bother about a position which was very natural for the surveyors to take up, and to expect to have a service miles from the direct route through difficult country which no engineer would suggest for a moment could be got through, and all because certain information was obtained in a railway train. A surveyor would be insane if he attempted to go through those hills in the circumstances. If the line is to be deviated to go round to the west of those hills it must start right back so as not to go through the hills at all. It must travel almost due west, then around to the north and to the back of the hills until it can go north again. Every mile in a westerly direction the line gets nearer to the Midland lands. I would not be opposed to that if we were serving our own people to any large extent. By running the line to the east we are serving our own people. I do not know who they are, but there are people living there and by the line taking this route it will be opening up a large tract of country. We must consider very carefully before de-

ciding that an alteration of the route should be made.

Mr. George: Have you the names of any of the owners of that land?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not a single name. The petition came in with 110 signatures praying that the railway should be constructed, and the Progress Association wrote asking that the survey should be carried out in this direction. The only position we can take up is that a proper inquiry will be made now that attention has been drawn to the matter. The hon. member has said that a petition is coming down; when that petition arrives it will receive due consideration. The engineers, however, will now be instructed to inspect the route which has been suggested.

Mr. George: You must alter your deviation line.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will do that; but we cannot give a guarantee that the railway will be carried to the West of the hills. I do not think the House would ask that.

Mr. George: I do not ask for that. I only ask that there should be a full inquiry before you make a mistake.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will put it in this concrete form: I am prepared to accept an amendment giving a deviation of 10 miles on either side, and I am prepared to promise that before the railway line is constructed there will be a full investigation of the claims of the people on the West side of the hills, an investigation by the engineers and the Lands Department officers.

Mr. Jacoby: A member of the Ministry ought to go there. Will an undertaking be given that a member of the Ministry will inspect the district before the route is ultimately decided upon?

The Premier: I would very much like to go there myself, but if I cannot go I can arrange for a member of the Ministry to visit the district.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Daghish in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Authority to construct:

Mr. KEENAN: The Minister for Lands, it was understood, was perfectly well aware of the fact that the country to the West of the hills contained better land, and that there were a large number of settlers on that side and that there were few, if any, on the Eastern side. That being so, would the Minister give an undertaking that if there were no engineering difficulties to speak of, difficulties which would not be insuperable, the line would be constructed to the 30 mile peg and then to the West side of the Wongan Hills.

The Premier: We cannot deviate from a line which is not surveyed.

Mr. JOHNSON: There were a number of people from the goldfields who had selected land on the Western side of the Wongan Hills, and in these men he (Mr. Johnson) had every confidence, and it would be absolutely wrong to put the line where the Government proposed to construct it.

The Minister for Works: We will have a fair inquiry.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was to be regretted that we had not received a more definite assurance from the Ministry than had been given. He was of opinion that the Government had given the surveyor directions which way they wanted the line to go, and he was not prepared to believe that Mr. Muir was left to decide which way the line was to go. It would be wrong to give Mr. Muir such directions because he was not an expert. We should have a definite understanding that the Government would build this line to the West if it was at all possible to do so, irrespective of whether it cost more or not. If it was possible to take a cart with a light load on it through that gap in the hills, it would be possible to put a railway there.

The Minister for Works: Not a working railway.

Mr. JOHNSON: In the country he came from there were plenty of railways going where it would not be possible to take a cart.

The Premier: It is only a question of money; you can build a railway anywhere if you have funds.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Government declared that they would put it there if it did not cost more. If that proviso were made it was a certainty that it would not go through the hills.

The Premier: You must remember that it will increase the length to your ultimate objective.

Mr. JOHNSON: If the ultimate objective was to reach the Cue line, would we be justified in putting down a light line?

The Minister for Works: The Midland railway line is just the same as this one will be. It is only a question of ballast.

The HONORARY MINISTER: On this direct route to Mullewa there would be a saving in distance of some 22 miles, and if Mullewa was to be the ultimate objective we should secure as great an advantage in distance as we possibly could. There was a gap in the hills whereby the bulk of the settlers would be brought within five or six miles of the line. The matter might well be left to the Minister.

Mr. GEORGE: The Honorary Minister had said the bulk of the settlers would be brought within five or six miles of the line. This particular gap ran North and South; it was a fairly steep range. To suppose that it would be possible to get a practicable cart route through was asking something he could not swallow. The bulk of the 60 settlers were North of Lake Hinds, which was fully six miles to the North of the entrance of this particular gap. The length of the gap was $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, so that these people would have to cart $8\frac{1}{4}$ miles to get to the terminus of a railway which really should be running right up to their holdings. He wanted the Minister to give an assurance that the line would not go beyond the point at which the deviation could be made if it were found desirable to make such deviation. If the Minister would give him that assurance he would be satisfied with regard to the line.

The Minister for Works: Oh, yes; you can have that assurance.

Mr. GEORGE: It was a pity the Minister still adhered to the out-of-date idea that one must not do anything for one's own people for fear that one should be doing something for someone else. It did not matter if the line helped to sell the Midland Company's land, because the sooner that land was settled the better for the State. All the settlers on the Midland Company's land would be contributors to the general revenue of the State. If he had had the Minister's assurance a little bit earlier he would not have made so much noise to-night.

Mr. McDOWALL: A number of gold-fields people had taken up land on the Western slope of the Wongan Hills. A consensus of opinion was that the line should be constructed on the Western side. He would support the deviation to the Western side.

Mr. OSBORN: If the line was to be constructed for the benefit of the settlers then the actual distance should not be taken into consideration, for the main object of the line would be to serve the settlers along the route.

Mr. ANGWIN: It was not at all certain that we should spend public money in opening up private lands, when lands belonging to the State were waiting to be selected. According to the Premier this district was a good wheat growing country. If so, it was our duty to open up our own country first. If really it was good wheat growing country, then the Government had done the proper thing in putting the railway line in such a direction as would throw open the Crown lands for cultivation.

Mr. HORAN: The Honorary Minister had said the distance to be saved on the Mullewa journey would be 22 miles. As a matter of fact the distance to be saved from Kalgoorlie to Mt. Magnet by this connection would be 300 miles.

3 o'clock a.m.

Mr. GEORGE: For 20 miles along the route the railway ran along within three to four miles of the boundary of the Midland Company's land, and if the railway deviated to the West of the hills the

nearest point of the Midland Company's land would be five or seven miles away.

The Minister for Works: But if the line is to the east it would be 15 miles away.

Mr. GEORGE: If we carried the line into poor country to avoid opening up the Midland Company's land, it would be a poor advertisement.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Deviation:

On motion by the Minister for Works the clause was amended by striking out "five" and inserting "ten" in line 3; and as amended was agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 7—agreed to

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment; the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—DOWERIN-MERREDIN RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 3rd December.

Mr. ANGWIN (East Fremantle): With regard to the information in the printed sheet, I think there must be some error. I notice that it says that there are only 85 resident occupiers within 15 miles of the proposed route; but seeing the special settlement at Yorkrakine, which is within fifteen miles of the line, contains 50 settlers, and seeing that several others have taken up land under ordinary conditions, and taking into consideration the Cowcowing district where there are many selected blocks, I certainly think the number is a long way below the actual figure. It shows that occasionally the information we get here is not reliable. I am pleased to learn that the land, particularly in the Yorkrakine settlement, will grow wheat if the land we were talking of just now will not. I have just received a letter from Yorkrakine telling me that one settler got 60 bags from 12 acres, making between 18 and 19 bushels per acre, also that one area stripped has gone 22 to 25 bushels to the acre.

Mr. Johnson: That is not a big return.

Mr. ANGWIN: When we take into consideration that 12 months ago this was all forest, that nothing had been done on it prior to then, and that fertilisers had not been used to any large extent, and that very little time has been allowed for dealing with the country, it is a fair return and shows me the land is suitable for growing wheat. The letter winds up by saying that the whole settlement will be delighted with the returns. They are highly pleased with the results of the farms so far. I have visited the district, and I have heard of the Cowcowing district and it is my opinion there are far more resident occupiers in the vicinity of this railway line than the statement before us shows. I hope this Bill will go through as quickly as possible.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): I am afraid the hon. member is not quite correct in his geography. There are many settlers in the Yorkkrakine area who are not within 15 miles of the route of this railway. It is somewhat unfortunate for these people that they are just about midway between the Eastern Railway and the proposed railway. I would have liked this railway goes a little further South to allow these settlers to be closer to a railway. It is easy enough for members who have not been nearer than Parliament House to talk about the district, but a glance at the map will show I am correct. There is a large amount of deviation allowed in the Bill, and if we get an assurance the line may be deviated in the direction of these settlers' holdings, I would be much more pleased with the Bill than I am now. Another matter that I would like to point out in connection with this railway is that it goes east of the extreme point which we may regard as agricultural country, according to our present knowledge, and I would warn the people of the State of the danger of going out as far east as Merredin to take up agricultural country.

Mr. Jacoby: What is the rainfall there?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is small and precarious, and what is worse the summer there comes in too early. Although the rainfall may register as much as at

Kellerberrin or at Tammin, experience shows us that in the usual summer weather—not the sort of weather we have been having this season—the heat comes so early that the wheat is dried up before it has time thoroughly to ripen and fill. The people should be warned about going up there. I have known many splendid men who went to the north of South Australia after a very good season; they struggled on year after year, they spent all their money, and suffered terrible hardships through having taken the risk of going into such dry country. I am favourable to the construction of this line. Without doubt Cowcowing and the country to the north of Kellerberrin is good, but when we get further east of Doodlakine the country is dangerous, and people should be warned against going there. After the last season it is only too likely that people will risk going out there. If they do the result will probably be that they will struggle for four or five years, lose all their money, and then be cast like wrecks on the care of the State. It is the duty of the Government to prevent settlers from going into that country until it has been thoroughly tested. It is fair country for the Government to experiment in, but it is not a fair thing that a man with a few hundred pounds should go and struggle there and risk all he possesses, including, perhaps, the lives of his family, in proving whether agriculture there is a success or failure.

Mr. Jacoby: They are not entting it up or surveying it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not think they are, but probably they will. In my opinion Merredin itself is too far east. My line of safety is Doodlakine, which is considerably west of Merredin, and even of Nangeenan. I would impress on the Government the absolute necessity of preventing settlers, especially those who are struggling and have not a superfluity of capital, from going to this country. I am not alone in this opinion, for one can hear from many old West Australians who know the country well how dangerous it is for people to go out to that country. Owing to the present

splendid season, and the grand rainfall we have had, the people are very liable to want to take up country there, but they should be prevented from doing so.

The Premier: You said the distance between the goldfields and the new line is 40 miles, but it is only 32.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Well, even in that case the people of the Yorkrakine settlement will have to cart their stuff 16 miles whichever way they go. I am sure it will be found when the line is built that many of the Yorkrakine settlers are not within 15 miles of it. In the interests of those settlers the line should be brought a little further south. The end of the line is too far east at present. I do not disagree with the junction being at Merredin, but I want to give a warning to new settlers that it is dangerous for them to take up agricultural country east of Yorkrakine.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): If the member looks at the map he will notice that the whole of the Yorkrakine settlers are within the 15-mile radius. Some are within 10 or 11 miles of the line.

Mr. Underwood: Then, your information was wrong as to the number of settlers.

The PREMIER: I believe something is wrong as to the 85 settlers, for there must be considerably more than that number there. If the line were further south it would mean that the settlers east of Cowcowing would have to go a deal further for their stuff. As to the necessity of settlers not going far out I quite agree with the hon. member, and will impress on the officers of the department that it is not advisable to encourage people to go further east. A board consisting of Mr. Paterson, Professor Lowrie, Mr. Johnston, Mr. Muir, and Mr. Terry reported on this line. They said—

within 15 miles, brings us to Merredin as the most suitable junction.”

You will see that they have taken the question into consideration. In regard to the area to be served within 15 miles of the proposed railway they consider there are 1,200,000 acres of land, and from the classification they made it is expected that there will be an area of wheat-growing land totalling 450,000 acres. Professor Lowrie says that if they crop there every third year, leaving an area of 150,000 acres for each year, there would be an average at a modest computation of 1¼ million bushels. An examination was made of the country, and the Ministers for Agriculture and Mines inspected it, while in addition there was a very exhaustive classification by Mr. Terry. I am quite satisfied that the proposal is a good one, and that it will be a line serving not only the interests of the settlers there, but it will be revenue producing and profitable in the course of a very few years.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Daglish in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Deviation:

Mr. BATH: The clause provided for a very considerable deviation, much more than in any railway Bill we have previously passed. There was one point he wished to have information on, and that was with regard to the deposits of gypsum at the Cowcowing lakes. He knew a gentleman who had made a number of experiments as to this deposit, and he stated that if facilities were given him by the deviation of the line to the north, or by a branch line, a very large industry could be worked up and the product would turn out very useful in many directions in connection with building operations. He had an opportunity of seeing the finished product after the deposit was treated, and it certainly made a splendid plaster of Paris, and was useful in many other connections for building. By the use of this deposit certain building opera-

“Having decided that the 10½ inch annual rainfall line is the absolute limit for our present agricultural belt, that line confines us on the east close to Burracoppin, and working on the usual principle of serving the country

tions could be conducted much cheaper than they were at the present time. This man stated that plaster of Paris could be manufactured and placed on the market at half the price that it commanded at present, and yet with profit to those working the deposits. It was also known that gypsum was used as manure. He had read reports of experiments made in America where it was regarded as being of considerable aid to agriculturists. In Victoria the director of agriculture regarded the results as negative.

The PREMIER: It is good in salt country.

Mr. BATH: Personally he had no knowledge about the character of the country on which it would be useful. If the Premier had gone into this matter, and if the claim which was made as to the value of the deposit could be substantiated, would there be any possibility of running a branch line to permit of the deposit being exploited for the benefit of the State?

The PREMIER: The map showed that the lease on which the deposits were, was about 10 miles away from the proposed line. A communication was addressed to him a considerable time ago, but he was not in a position to say that the line would assist this industry, as the industry had not been developed. He believed that gypsum was used in salt country. If attention to the matter was justified it would receive consideration at the hands of the Government.

Mr. Bath: If they bring the matter under your notice?

The PREMIER: The hon. member could rest assured that careful consideration would be given to it.

Mr. ANGWIN moved an amendment—

That in line 3 the word "fifteen" be struck out and "five" inserted in lieu.

This was the only Bill in which the distance was made 15 miles.

The PREMIER: There would be no objection to the amendment.

Amendment passed; clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 7—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1909-10.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 3rd December; Mr. Daglish in the Chair.

Agricultural Department (Hon. J. Mitchell, Minister).

Vote—Agriculture generally, £19,145:

Mr. UNDERWOOD moved—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	9
Noes	27

Majority against .. 18

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Swan
Mr. Gill	Mr. Troy
Mr. Gourley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Horan	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. McDowall	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Bath	Mr. Monger
Mr. Bolton	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Butcher	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Carson	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Osborn
Mr. George	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Gordon	Mr. J. Price
Mr. Gregory	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Walker
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. Ware
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Layman
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS AND AGRICULTURE: Since the appointment of Professor Lowrie as Director of Agriculture there have been many alterations made in connection with this department all of which have tended to more effective working. It is desired now that Professor Lowrie should have experts to assist him in the developmental work which is being carried on, and for that

purpose it will be seen that provision has been made on the Estimates for the appointment of an irrigation expert. This expert has, as a matter of fact, been working for the past two years, and has done a great deal of good already. The idea of irrigating has been taken up by the people who are living on permanent streams in the South-West and already some 40 settlers have availed themselves of this expert's advice and assistance. The first experiment has been made at Bunbury, and it has been entirely satisfactory. Another experiment is being carried out at Pinjarrah where I have had the opportunity of seeing four irrigation schemes put in by Mr. Fawcett. The department has also appointed a dairy expert, Mr. Abernethy, who is a practical dairy farmer, and he is now engaged at Brunswick. Hon. members know that we have enormous areas in the North-West suitable for tropical cultivation. Mr. Despeissis who is now Commissioner of tropical agriculture is visiting the North-West under instruction and will prepare reports. When these reports come to hand they will be found very interesting and instructive. The department also proposes to appoint a pathologist. Development during the past year was very satisfactory. The acreage under crop is increasing day by day; it is 681,000 acres this year as against 283,000 acres five years ago. The difference between these two figures is one-half of the total increase under crop in Australia during the last five years. It will be agreed that Western Australia has done very well. The season has been all that one could desire, and it is hoped the harvest will be quite what the statistician expects. It is fairly certain that we shall export very largely this year; not less than 80,000 tons of wheat, probably 100,000 tons. Altogether the crop will mean an increase over that of last year of something like half a million of sovereigns to the producers of the State. That half a million sovereigns will be lodged in our banks and will be responsible for a great deal of activity in the State during the next 12 months. That half a million in excess of what we

produced last year is a considerable sum. Sheep in the State must number now $4\frac{1}{2}$ million, while our cattle in the North are increasing very rapidly. So, too, is the fruit; our area under crop is now almost equal to that of Tasmania. I do not intend to detain the Committee at any length with the introduction of these Estimates.

Mr. Angwin: The irrigation expert, who is he?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He comes from Fremantle; all good men come from Fremantle. The department will cost this year £5,000 less than it cost last year.

Mr. Bath: You have transferred some to loan.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very little has gone to loan; at any rate the cost of the department is £5,000 less than it was last year. I do not know that it is necessary to say anything further at this early hour in the morning. The department has been well and economically managed during the last year, and with the aid of Professor Lowrie it will do well during the next year.

Mr. BATH (Brown Hill): There was no need for a Minister, when introducing his Estimates, to apologise for the shortness of his remarks on the score of it being early in the morning. It mattered little what hour it was if explanation was necessary, or if the Minister had information to place before members; whether it was 4 o'clock in the morning or 4 o'clock in the afternoon the Minister should give it. The first thing to be noticed in connection with the Estimates was the fact that experts had been appointed in various directions. In the first division there were no fewer than five experts provided for. A commissioner of tropical agriculture, a pathologist, a dairy expert, and the irrigation expert in addition to the Director of Agriculture, who was the departmental head. Surely there was some chance of a combination of these duties being carried out by one individual. With the practical education, together with scientific instruction which was given in various agricultural colleges, such as that at

Hawkesbury in New South Wales, surely it would be possible to obtain a gentleman who could combine two or more of these offices in one person. Without counting the salary paid to the Director for Agriculture there was no less than £1,500 provided for these experts. With all due regard to the interests of agriculture there seemed ground for suspecting that we were paying too dearly for our whistle. We were paying for too many experts in the Agricultural Department. He recognised that the director, if he were to be of any use to the agriculturists of the State, should be an active gentleman, not confined too much to his office in Perth, but making himself acquainted with the various agricultural interests of the State, and coming into contact with the men who were working on the land in order that he might assist them with his views. Surely we could obtain someone who would act under the director and who would be able to combine some of those subordinate offices and so obviate the very large expenditure for the payment of experts. Where we had to pay an individual salary of £450 for an irrigation expert, it would probably be found that a capable man could be got in the Eastern States with a knowledge of irrigation and, at the same time, a knowledge of other matters for which separate items were provided in the Estimates. In providing a big salary for the commissioner of tropical agriculture we were putting the cart before the horse. We had taken no steps whatever to provide opportunities for agriculture being carried on in the tropics. Could the Minister say where land could be obtained in the North-West for tropical agriculture.

The Minister for Lands: It will be made available.

Mr. BATH: There had recently come under his notice a case in which certain men had been driven about from pillar to post in search of land for carrying on the culture of tobacco in the tropics. In their search for land they had been told that none was available and that most of what was suitable was held under pastoral lease; and the only proposition

put to them was the provision of some reserve in the North which the department said might be made available for the purpose. If we were going in for tropical agriculture, surely it would have been better first to have provided facilities for men to go on the land; then the Commissioner could have come along and given them whatever advice was needed. As it stood it seemed that the salary, a payment involving £650 a year, would be practically thrown away for some little time to come.

The Minister for Lands: You can resume any land from pastoral lease for agriculture.

Mr. BATH: It was not so in the Kimberleys; the Land Act did not apply to the Kimberley district.

The Minister for Lands: I think it does.

Mr. BATH: Another matter in which it seemed to him the department was going to involve the State in a considerable expense, a good deal of which could have been saved, was in connection with the abattoirs at Kalgoorlie. At the present time we were making provision for the constitution of a staff to run these abattoirs. In addition to the gentleman who would have charge of them there was to be a big staff to carry on the work. At the same time there would be health inspectors under the health board in the district; indeed, these officers were at the present time carrying out this work and carrying it out satisfactorily. They were men who had gone to a great deal of trouble, who, besides their practical experience, had studied and passed the necessary examinations. These men would be set aside and another staff appointed to carry out the work. When the Bill was under discussion he had pointed that out to the Committee and stated that economy would be given consideration and efficiency still preserved if the Agricultural Department were to work in conjunction with the Health Department in order that the necessity for appointing new officers might be obviated.

4 o'clock a.m.

Mr. BATH: This could be dealt with in the item, "Commissioner for Tropical

Agriculture." The Minister should not boast of the saving claimed to have been effected; because, while there was a net decrease of £3,312, of this £1,500 was brought about simply by transferring from revenue to loan.

The Minister for Lands: That is to cover loan expenditure.

Mr. BATH: This method he had always protested against. It was a growing practice, that of transferring a certain amount of expenditure to loan funds and, in consequence, transferring a proportion of the cost of administration to loan funds, whereas in the first place the original transfer was not legitimate. The *Statistical Abstract* showed how the vote for the development of agriculture was growing year by year, and a great deal of the expenditure under that heading could by no stretch of imagination be deemed reproductive. This method of economy and avoiding the necessity to raise revenue to carry out work, meant building up trouble for the future. We spent £152,000 last year from loan under the heading of "Development of Agriculture," and there were many doubtful items included in the expenditure. Although the administration of the Health Department was undoubtedly faulty and lacking in the vigilance necessary to preserve the health of the people, it was a step in the wrong direction to transfer the inspection of dairy herds from the Health Department to the Stock Department. This was proved by the information to hand from time to time as to cows suffering from tuberculosis being allowed to stray and become a menace to every dairy herd, and to the health of the community. In every case where cows have been proved to be suffering severely from the last stages of tuberculosis and had been found straying, it was through the efforts of the police.

The Minister for Lands: In how many cases?

Mr. BATH: Three or four recently. These cases were sufficiently convincing to show there was grave dereliction of duty on the part of the Stock Department. If these officers were seized with the necessity for vigilance it would not

be necessary for the police to carry out the work. Greater vigilance should be shown, or the work should be handed back to the Health Department. Without professing to be an expert on agriculture he urged there were too many experts in the department.

Mr. Jacoby: We have not enough.

Mr. BATH: Then alleged experts! We were building up too great an expenditure in this department, and in doing so were showing a great contrast with the attitude shown in the control of hospitals. We were lavish in providing experts, and in taking care of the live stock, crops, and vegetables of the farmers and producers, but we were not so regardful of the lives and health of the sick in our hospitals. Human life should come first. It was the duty of the State to assist the agricultural industry; it was an industry worth encouraging when done legitimately; but there was no reason to be lavish in our expenditure in this direction while reducing the expenditure so far as public health was concerned.

Mr. GILL: The gentleman sent to explore the country in connection with deposits of fertilisers made serious complaints in regard to the treatment he received from the Agricultural Department.

Mr. Heitmann: What is his name?

Mr. GILL: Goetzal. This gentleman had made a statement to the effect that after entering into communication with the Minister for Agriculture he was asked under what conditions he would be prepared to explore the country, and that he said he was prepared to go out for a fixed sum—£100 it was understood it was—and a bonus.

The Minister for Lands: I believe there is an agreement.

Mr. GILL: This gentleman stipulated for a bonus in addition if he found anything of value worthy of the consideration of the Minister. The Minister would not agree to it, but Mr. Goetzal gave the Minister to understand he would not go out under any other conditions. Mr. Goetzal eventually, according to his own statement, laid it down, and the Under Secretary for Agriculture (Mr. Despeis-

sis) put it in writing, that he was prepared to go out for a stated sum and the bonus.

The Minister for Lands: Did he say I refused him the bonus?

Mr. GILL: Yes. Mr. Goezel said that on the last time he saw the Minister he told the Minister he would not go out unless he got the bonus; but, without promising to give the bonus, the Minister asked him whether he was prepared to go out, and he replied he was ready to go within two days. Subsequently Mr. Goezel went out into the country, and later on, while in the country, had typed conditions sent on to him, containing, however, nothing in regard to the bonus. On being asked why he did not immediately return to Perth to see about the matter, Mr. Goezel had explained it would be a waste of time to return to Perth and an act of discourtesy to the Minister to doubt his intentions. Mr. Goezel acknowledged the Minister did not give his word straight out, but thought that, having been engaged after telling the Minister he would not go out without a bonus, it was on those conditions he was engaged. Mr. Goezel complained he was led to believe he was to be paid the bonus when he definitely said he would not go out without one.

The Minister for Lands: You can look at the papers if you like.

Mr. GILL would be pleased to see them. It seemed to be a breach of faith on the part of the Minister. A question was recently asked if any work was being done by the department in connection with these deposits, and the Minister said, "No." The W.A. Producers' Union had just sent out a circular to settlers stating that the Government had approached them in regard to the distribution of these fertilisers in the future. It was generally thought that the Government intended to hand the handling of fertilisers over either to the Producers' Union or to some other firm. However, last session when this matter was first brought forward it was said distinctly by the Government that the deposits would not be handed over to a private firm.

Mr. Jacoby: The Producers' Union is not a private firm, but a co-operative union.

Mr. GILL: We were given to understand the Government would keep it in their own hands for the benefit of the settlers.

The Minister for Lands: We have it in our hands.

Mr. GILL: If the fertiliser got into the hands of the W.A. Producers' Union or any other company, the time was not far distant when we would have a monopoly in fertilisers as there was in the Eastern States. Then settlers would have to pay a big increase in the cost. As the Government had the deposits on Crown lands they should work them, and any benefit to be derived should be given to the settlers. The gentleman who had complained about the matter had informed him that he had made an offer but that it had not been entertained.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think it should be entertained?

Mr. GILL: It would be better to entertain that offer than one from the W.A. Producers' Union. That gentleman had said he put in the offer because he knew that someone was negotiating with the Government.

The Minister for Lands: Yes; he was negotiating.

Mr. GILL: He had as much right to do so as anyone else.

Mr. Jacoby: Not as good as the farmers themselves.

Mr. GILL: According to the circular the Government had approached the Producers' Union. The man had told him he was tricked.

The Minister for Lands: More tricky than tricked.

Mr. GILL: It was to be hoped the Minister would see that the Government kept the fertiliser in their own hands.

[Mr. Carson took the Chair.]

Mr. JACOBY: The complaint of the leader of the Opposition that important Estimates like these deserved a full explanation by the Minister and the careful consideration of the House was well founded. He would point out, however, that under the circumstances

he was afraid that so far as any benefit likely to accrue from this discussion was concerned there could not be much for no reporter was present, and, he was afraid, *Hansard* was not a sufficiently popular magazine to be very widely read. Therefore, he did not intend to say much on the Estimates, but there were one or two points he would like to mention for the consideration of the Minister. He joined issue with the statement of the leader of the Opposition that we were getting too many experts, and that probably the duties of several of them might be performed by one man. As far as his experience went, it was in the direction that one man who was supposed to know all about everything, was not much good practically at anything. A man must be a thorough expert in one department to be a success. Objection had been taken to the appointment of an irrigationist. There was an enormous opportunity for the development of irrigation in this State and he had been informed that the services of this officer were being largely availed of by farmers. It was a sound principle that success could be gauged not so much by the number of acres as by the product per acre, and if we could by any educational propaganda from the Department of Agriculture increase the amount produced per acre, that was far more important than to increase the number of acres utilised. There was no direction in which better assistance could be rendered than by the appointment of an irrigation expert. Take the production of lucerne for example. If the appointment led to the State supplying its own lucerne would anyone say that the appointment was not justified? There was an enormous demand for lucerne now. It was very important in connection with the growth of the plant to provide for irrigation. He knew of an instance where lucerne had been successfully established on a practical basis, but it cost the owner £8 an acre to grade and prepare the land properly for the purpose of planting. If we could increase the quantity of land under lucerne in the State by 100 acres per year

the value of the product from that quantity would more than justify the appointment of the expert. The member in objecting asked why we should neglect the hospitals while looking after stock? The first necessity for the upkeep of hospitals was cash and we could not get that until we produced wealth. The best way to provide for the sick and infirm was to increase the wealth of the people, and that could not be done in a better way than by teaching the people to grow more and more for the same area. The value of the work of this officer would be very great. That gentleman's services had been very largely availed of, and in fact there was more demand on his time in the direction of advising farmers than he could possibly attend to. The Government said the officer was to advise whether the facilities of a farm were such as to justify the work of irrigation being gone on with. After that the farmer had to pay for his own engineering work. The irrigationist advised that the scheme could be carried out and the farmer put the matter into the hands of an engineer. It was nothing in the direction of spoon-feeding. The sum of £450 was down for the expert. Perhaps it might surprise members to know that in Victoria where they had great experience in the work of irrigation the expert was paid £3,000 a year.

The Minister for Lands: £2,000 a year.

Mr. JACOBY: The Minister for Agriculture in Victoria had said that he would sooner pay their irrigationist expert £5,000 a year than lose him.

Mr. Angwin: He is a man of professional ability.

[*Mr. Daglish resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. JACOBY: Yes; a man in the first flight of his work. They got him from America. If it were said that we did not propose to pay our expert enough he could have understood the objection. He took exception to the item "Commissioner for Tropical Agriculture." While we had other branches of agricultural industry that were neglected for want of proper experts, he failed to see why we should try to develop an

industry the successful establishment of which was very doubtful. The gentleman who had been selected for this work was not suited for it. It was only from a strong sense of duty that made him (Mr. Jacoby) declare the appointment to be a highly mistaken one. To begin with, there must be a practical man to carry on these investigations. Mr. Despeissis had filled various offices in the State. His first one was that of horticultural expert, and now we found him an expert in tropical agriculture. All that could be said was that if Mr. Despeissis received that appointment there would be no expert of tropical agriculture. If it was the intention of the Government to develop tropical agriculture in this State the best thing to do would be to get a practical man and send him to the tropical parts of the State. There were men in Australia who had succeeded in tropical agriculture, and he had reason to believe that such men were available. If the services of a practical man who had made a success of this branch of agriculture were obtained, and his reports were favourable, then steps could be taken to place the man in charge of developmental work up there. We had something like one and a quarter million pounds invested in this State in fruit growing, and we were still without the services of an expert who could take up that branch of it which was too technical for the ordinary horticulturist. He would impress upon the Minister the necessity for appointing an expert in horticulture. In most of our industries we were still in the infancy stage, and if by the work of the department the products of our acres could be slightly increased, it would mean an immense addition to the wealth of the State. We had seen the result of the selection of wheat in South Australia, and it had been shown that yields from varieties which gave under ordinary circumstances 8 bushels, had been increased to something like 20 bushels to the acre. Here we had an enormous field for Professor Lowrie to take up. If we were to use the State farms for growing selected wheats which should be made available

to the farmer afterwards, we would appreciably increase the average of wheat to be raised from the land. One extra bushel per acre was worth £200,000 per million acres, and from that some idea could be gauged of the value of the work of increasing the yield from our lands. With regard to the difficulty of getting skilled men for orchard work, the opportunity lay before the Department of Agriculture to establish a school of horticulture to train up our young fellows in the technical branch of this industry. Such an institution could be made not only self-supporting but young fellows would render themselves capable of earning a good living. He desired to express gratification at the fact that the farmers had been listening with advantage to the lectures which Professor Lowrie had been delivering. It was most important to the State that we had succeeded in securing the services of a gentleman like Professor Lowrie. There might be many men capable of delivering lectures, but it was questionable whether there was another man in Australia who was listened to with such attention and for whom the farmers had so much respect as Professor Lowrie. The result of his work would be very far reaching indeed.

Mr. HAYWARD: Having had the opportunity of seeing a considerable amount of work done by the irrigation expert it could be said that this officer had been thoroughly successful at Brunswick, and had induced others to invest in machinery and lay out their lands for irrigation. Mr. Foster Johnson had spent a considerable amount in laying out his land, and getting it into good order.

Mr. Angwin: Very few farmers will go to the expense that the State has gone to at Brunswick.

Mr. HAYWARD: There was another person who had done the same thing as Mr. Johnson at the Preston, and next year it was certain that all those who would go in for dairying would also go in for irrigation.

Mr. Angwin: Where are they going in for dairying?

Mr. HAYWARD: Already in one factory the output of butter was two tons per week which showed that a considerable advance was being made. With regard to the dairy expert he was quite as necessary as the irrigation expert. Farmers in this State had much to learn on the subject of dairying, and by having an expert on whom they could rely for advice, and if this expert could go round the country and show the farmers the best way of carrying on their business, the money he received would be well expended indeed. The leader of the Opposition suggested that some of these offices should be combined. That, however, was impossible. If we got an expert in irrigation, this expert could not be expected to be an expert in any other department, and so it was with other experts.

Mr. W. PRICE: The member for Swan had spoken of the urgent necessity for an irrigation expert in the State. He (Mr. Price) would join issue with the hon. member on that point. He had seen in the Eastern States thousands and thousands of acres of lucerne with which no expert had anything to do. The Government of New South Wales did not pay an expert to come along and tell people what to do. Money spent upon these experts in Western Australia was so much money lavished upon spoon-feeding the agriculturists. Many hon. members did not believe in socialism, but they believed in the Government providing cheap assistance; they were in the habit of going to the Government like beggars for a crust.

Mr. Jacoby: Who did?

Mr. W. PRICE: The member for Swan had gone and begged money with which to start a jam factory.

Mr. Jacoby: The hon. member was not quite accurate. The deputation had been introduced by the member for Collie, at whose request he (Mr. Jacoby) had attended the deputation.

Mr. W. PRICE: It was all the same; the member for Swan had gone begging to the Government. It was the duty of the farmers to help themselves, and not rely upon the Government for assistance. Some of the employees of the

Agricultural Department were sweated in order that the department might be able to afford to pay high priced experts. Thus there were insect pest inspectors who were getting £200 per annum, with £150 travelling allowance; and there were fruit inspectors who were paid only £160 per annum, and £120 travelling allowance. How was it that these men were only allowed £120 for travelling allowances, seeing that all the other inspectors were allowed £150? One of them had to travel from Albany to Spencer's Brook, and was not able to get more than six days at home in two months. Another man had to do the whole of the South-West district, while the third did the Midland line, and the fourth looked to the metropolitan area. Even the lands inspectors, who were not required to possess any particular skill, were paid £40 per annum more than these fruit inspectors of whom special knowledge was required. It was to be hoped the Minister would see to it that these men were paid better salaries, and that this glaring anomaly was removed. Recently the Minister for Agriculture had placed an embargo upon potatoes, and as a result of the carelessness of the department in notifying the public of that embargo, one importer in Albany had lost no less than £149. Two days before the embargo was proclaimed in Western Australia it had been known by the shippers in Melbourne that it would be so proclaimed. Potatoes were denied admittance on the 19th August, and the first intimation of this which arrived in Albany was on the 21st, two days after it had been published in Perth and Fremantle. The reason for this was that the officers of the Agricultural Department had sent a telegram to a partially paid inspector in Albany, who at the time the telegram was sent was 14 miles away in the bush on his farm. To be quite correct the telegram despatched from Perth on the 19th was not actually received by the inspector until the 23rd. It could only have been gross and culpable carelessness in the department which would have led to such a result. As he had said, one importer in Albany lost £149; and,

as a matter of fact, the total loss in Albany through this culpable carelessness of the Agricultural Department had amounted to between £500 and £600. The first intimation received in Albany of the embargo had arrived in the *West Australian* on the Saturday morning. Surely something should be done to recompense these people who were the victims of the carelessness of the officers of the department. The notice was issued on the 19th, but on the 20th a firm in Albany were informed by wire from Melbourne as to the embargo. Mr. Barnett, at that time the member for the district, immediately wired to the Minister for Agriculture to inquire as to the truth of the contents of the telegram received from Melbourne, and the wire was not replied to until Saturday afternoon. Immediately the notification was seen in the *West Australian* the Albany importers wired to Melbourne to order any potatoes being shipped to be held back. Unfortunately in one case the order was too late and the shipment came on to Albany and had to be sent back again to the East at the cost to the importer of 10s. a ton. Despite the fact that no telegram was received in Albany as to the removal of the embargo, on the 1st September a Fremantle firm wired to Albany stating that imported potatoes could be purchased in Fremantle at a certain price per ton. How was it they were able to sell imported potatoes in Fremantle if the Fremantle importers had been compelled to return their potatoes to Victoria, when the people of Albany were not even informed that the embargo had been removed?

The Minister for Lands: They probably had some in stock.

Mr. W. PRICE: Could a more futile or sillier excuse be advanced? The Minister knew there were no potatoes to be bought in bulk in the State. It was not until the day after that the people of Albany were informed the embargo had been removed. This matter did not redound to the credit of the Minister or his officers, and it was to be hoped justice would be done to the victims of this carelessness.

5 o'clock a.m.

Mr. ANGWIN called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and quorum formed.

Mr. W. PRICE: Here was an instance of how the Government aided a bona fide movement among the producers in the Albany district. A boast was made of the fact that the Government desired to aid certain people in establishing jam factories by lending them money at 4 per cent. Some producers in the Albany district wished to establish cool storage accommodation, and an officer of the Agricultural Department who went to Albany to make inquiries as to what the Government should advance, demanded they should pay 8 per cent., namely 4 per cent. interest, and 4 per cent. sinking fund. Why this differentiation?

The Premier: There was no differentiation in the interest.

Mr. W. PRICE: They considered 4 per cent. sinking fund too high, and the officer said, "Make it 6 per cent. interest, and 2 per cent. sinking fund," but finally he came down to 4 per cent. interest and 2 per cent. sinking fund. At any rate that was the aid given by the Government to individuals who were in a constituency not loyal to the Government.

The Minister for Lands: We found all the money for the Albany people, and only half for the jam factory.

Mr. W. PRICE: In the one instance the Government helped a crowd of speculators who were going to exploit the fruit growers. In the other case they were about to help the producers themselves. It was to be hoped the Minister for Lands would show no differential treatment had been meted out between a district which was loyal to the Government, and a district which was looked upon as disloyal.

Mr. JOHNSON: In regard to the determination to establish public sale yards, information should be given in the interests of the producers and of the consumers in the metropolitan area. The position was this. Some time ago, the Midland Railway Company, seeing

the necessity for public sale yards, established yards at Midland Junction. The business there had been gradually increasing, until to-day sales were conducted twice and sometimes three times a week, and there was always a large amount of stock yarded. It had now been found that the yards were too small to accommodate the stock sent in, and having an opportunity of complaining about the smallness of the yards and the want of facilities, we found that the big wholesale butchering firms, or the organisation called the meat ring, had approached the Government requesting them to establish sale yards somewhere else, as those at Midland Junction were unsuitable. The Midland yards were unsuitable because the ring found that the small butchers were going to those yards and buying their stock as they required it, and were consequently cutting into the control of the meat trade these men had possessed for so many years. If the yards were unsuitable from the small butchers' point of view, why did not the small butcher complain; but it was a remarkable fact that the complaints the whole time were made by the big men. Only quite recently these big butchers signed a round robin and sent it to the Midland Company, saying that if they did not give the yards up they would refuse to purchase there.

Mr. Gordon: Who are they?

Mr. JOHNSON: The big meat combine, Connor and Doherty, Copley, Atkinson & Sons, Forrest and Emanuel; still sales went on. The small butchers went there and the producers sold their stock. That action, combined with the action of the big men in going to the Minister to complain, showed that from the big butchers' point of view, the yards were undesirable, but that from the small butchers' point of view they were desirable and no complaints were made. We could view the consumers position from that of the butchers. When we found that the small butcher was able to compete successfully against the combine owing to the sale yards at Midland Junction, that surely indicated that the consumer was getting a better deal than he did before. Take the producers.

They to-day desired to get hold of the yards themselves so that they might make them up-to-date, thus clearly showing that the producers were satisfied that the sale yards were in the right place. The small butcher was satisfied, the consumer was satisfied, the producer was satisfied, yet the Minister was dissatisfied and sympathised with the big butchers once more.

The Minister for Lands: That is not so.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister might not see it, but that was exactly the position. The people influencing the Minister against the yards were those in the big combine, who did not want the yards at all.

Mr. Gordon interjected.

Mr. JOHNSON: I wish that thing from the Zoo would stop yelping.

The Chairman: The member must withdraw that remark.

Mr. JOHNSON: I wish you, Mr. Chairman, would keep him in order; anyhow, I will withdraw the remark.

The CHAIRMAN: The member must not reflect on the Chair.

Mr. JOHNSON: I have no desire to reflect on the Chair; but the interjections are decidedly out of order when perpetual and one should be protected. I withdraw any reflection on the Chair.

Mr. Gordon: Let the hon. member speak facts and I will not interject.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister was influenced by the big men, who wished that the yard should be continually shifted so that complete metropolitan markets would never be established, and the Minister played right into their hands. The sale yards at Midland Junction were totally inadequate for requirements; there was not room for the stock brought in, and it accordingly had to be put into the back yards. The people asked the Minister to go through there and see the yards for himself, and all they wanted from him was an assurance that if the producers, or the Midland Railway, or the municipality established up-to-date and complete yards he would not use State moneys to establish other yards to come into competition with them. Unfortunately, however, they could not get that assurance, and the Minister would

not give a definite statement one way or the other. The position was unsatisfactory and distinctly unfair. It was unfair to the producer, unfair to the consumer, and unfair from every point of view. Would the Minister decide early on some course of action? The big meat combine were successful, by causing this delay, in gradually breaking up the market, and the Minister was playing right into their hands.

Mr. GORDON: The member for Guildford said that the accommodation at Midland Junction was inadequate. He was quite right, for not only was it inadequate but the position was not suitable for central sale yards. He did not know why the people of Perth and Fremantle should be compelled to go right to Midland Junction twice or three times a week in order to buy their stock. The small butchers, whose cause the hon. member advocated were badly handicapped through having to go there every week. If metropolitan yards were erected, as they would be, they must be between Perth and Fremantle.

Mr. OSBORN: How did the member for Canning arrive at his conclusions? It was not only the consumer who had to be considered, but there was the producer also. If the producer were to be considered, as we understood the Minister for Agriculture was anxious he should be, then undoubtedly the position at Midland Junction was most suitable for him. It was admitted freely that the present yards were not sufficient to accommodate the stock being taken there for sale, but that was no argument that the site was not a good one. The fact of the matter was that the stock were going in at such a rate that they could not be accommodated. That surely was a demonstration that the site was a suitable one and an additional argument in this direction was that the producers as a body would be willing to undertake the erection of up-to-date yards in the vicinity. Not that they should be at Midland Junction, but that they should be in the vicinity of that town. Yards established there would be in the interests both of the producer and consumer. The week before last there was a very large yarding

of cattle and sheep; owing to the quantity all the stock were not sold, but the balance left over were able to be paddocked there until the following week, when they were again put up and sold. The producers were very anxious to have the assurance that the Minister would not erect yards against them. They were now negotiating with the Midland Railway Company for the lease of a site on which they could erect yards to accommodate all stock likely to be brought in. If the producers were so determined that that was the correct place the Minister should not come between them and the consumers and say that sale yards for stock must be established in or near Perth. No one was asking for yards near Perth except the large meat holders in the metropolitan area. The gentleman mentioned by Mr. Johnson signed a round robin threatening the producers that they would not go to Midland Junction to buy their stock if the sales were conducted up there.

Mr. Bolton: And they held the key to the situation.

Mr. OSBORN: They did nothing of the sort, for notwithstanding what they said they went to the sales the next week; the small men offered them a few pounds to keep away from the sale for it would have suited them splendidly had they done so, but they had been there ever since and would continue to go. It was to be hoped the Minister would not assist financially in the establishment of sale yards in the metropolitan area, because they should not have any advantage over those in the suburbs. The Minister had been ill-advised if he had decided that sale yards should be in the vicinity of Perth.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say so; I have not determined where they are to be.

Mr. OSBORN: It was re-assuring to hear the Minister say that. The producers and the consumers, it was to be hoped, would yet be able to persuade the Minister that in the interests of both a more suitable site than in the City of Perth would be found for the sale yards.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 5.35 a.m.