

seams dip at a convenient angle to work in, being inclined at the rate of about 1 in 10. When just after the armistice I visited the vast brown coal mines of Rhineland, to the west of Cologne, I found the Germans working on brown coal with not less than 50 to 60 per cent. of water in it—

Hon. members will bear that in mind.

—and utilising these mines as centres for generating a vast amount of electrical energy for distribution for power purposes and for lighting over a radius of 50 miles around the field. At one mine alone—the Fortuna, eight miles west of Cologne—I saw there was an output of some 30,000 tons of brown coal daily, and a considerable proportion of this was burned locally in furnaces for generating 120,000 continuous kilowatts of electrical energy. This power was transmitted to the vast arsenal and factories at Essen—

This will appeal to hon. members.

—and adjacent manufacturing areas, from 50 to 60 miles distant. It seems to me that the day is probably not far distant when the Collic coalfield will be a vast centre for generating electrical energy—

This supports my case wonderfully, and the words are almost identically those I used when submitting the motion.

—which will be transmitted thence to Perth and other nearer areas in the South-West. A scheme of this kind on a large scale is being developed under the able administration of Sir John Monash at the great Morwell brown coal field, some 80 miles east of Melbourne, for transmission of power to Melbourne. Morwell coal contains double the amount of moisture of Collic coal. If, therefore, the Morwell coal can be successfully utilised for this purpose, much more should Collic coal be suitable for such a purpose.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Did the professor make any reference to the cost of Collic coal to the State?

Hon. J. EWING: I do not intend to refer to that subject because I would be out of order in doing so. I need only remind the people of the State what they owe to the Collic coalfields. I do not intend to delay the House any longer except to express the hope that the division on this motion will have a favourable result. The position is serious for Western Australia in that we are supplying electricity to Perth and Fremantle under a contract for a period of 50 years at great loss. This will continue unless we can get cheaper coal. I am not blaming either the Perth City Council or the Fremantle Council for being able to get their current at such a low rate. What I do desire is that electricity should be produced at below three-farthings per unit. Hon. members should consider whether the question is worthy of investigation. I say, let us have this inquiry,

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

Ayes	6
Noes	7

Majority against	..	1
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AYES.

Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. G. W. Miles	(Teller.)
Hon. E. Rose	

NOES.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. Lovekin
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. E. H. Harris	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 25th October, 1921.

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

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Council's Requested Amendment.

Amendment requested by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 5.—Add the following proviso:—Provided that, in any assessment made under this clause, a deduction shall be allowed for interest or other expenditure incurred by the person in the production of the income derived from dividends.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to the amendment. It is not the practice now to make such a deduction. Last year we

brought the law into line with the Income Tax Act as regarded all amounts which would pay dividend duty at a higher rate than 1s. 3d. in the pound. It is right that this deduction should be made. I move—

That the amendment be made.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How will this apply to other income? Taxpayers have to incur expense to earn their incomes, but no deduction is made. Members are put to the expense to travel through their electorates, and no allowance is made. If it is right to give this privilege to income from dividends, why should not other people be allowed similar deductions? The argument applies also to a man who has to pay a few shillings each week by way of fares to reach his employment.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Premier did not offer a very satisfactory explanation for accepting the amendment. I know that this originated with the Chamber of Commerce. Should not an amendment be made to the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act?

The Premier: No.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The objection made by the member for North-East Fremantle appears to be sound. Why should companies be treated differently from individuals?

The Premier: This would affect individuals.

Mr. WILLCOCK: To be logical, it should include everyone. We should not legislate for companies or for one class of individuals. I am not disposed to favour the amendment unless it embraces the whole gamut of income taxation.

Mr. TROY: I did not grasp the Premier's explanation. The amendment provides that a person, who receives the whole of his income from dividends, shall have deducted from his assessment the expense incurred in the collection of the dividends.

The Premier: No, in connection with the earning of the dividends.

Mr. TROY: That is allowed for prior to the payment of the dividends. A dividend is declared by a company after all expenses have been deducted. Now the Premier proposes to give a person whose income is derived from dividends a further exemption.

The PREMIER: This will apply where the income exceeds the amount which would be charged at the rate of 1s. 3d. in the pound. If income derived from dividends amounted to, say, £2,000, it would be taxable at 2s. 6d. in the pound and the person would pay at the rate of 1s. 3d. on the amount received in excess of the income charged at 1s. 3d., but he would not be given any advantage over a man who earned his income in the ordinary way. So far we have not made any deduction for the cost of earning dividends. If a person borrowed £5,000 and put it into a company, and paid 6 per cent. interest on the money, the amount of interest would be allowed under this amendment. The Council's amendment is quite reasonable.

Mr. ANGELO: In the Upper House the Minister for Education contended that this amendment was not necessary. He said that he had consulted both the Crown Law Department and the Commissioner of Taxation regarding it, and had been advised that under the existing law this deduction was allowed. It appears to me, however, that the amendment might be accepted, so as to place it beyond the power of the Commissioner of Taxation to disallow any deduction of this nature.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Premier has put up a very good argument in favour of the Council's amendment, not only as regards people deriving income from dividends, but as regards all people earning incomes. If the Premier would agree to the deletion of the words "from dividends," the Committee could safely accept the Council's amendment, knowing that it would apply to everybody in the State.

The Premier: The Act already provides for what the hon. member suggests.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment on the Council's amendment—

That the words "derived from dividends" be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: If those words are struck out, the Council's amendment will have no meaning.

Mr. TROY: Other words can be substituted.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The carrying of the amendment on the amendment would leave matters exactly as they now stand, seeing that the Council's amendment deals with dividends. In order to achieve his end, the member for Williams-Narrogin should move that the word "clause" be struck out and "Act" inserted in lieu.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Very well; I ask leave to withdraw my amendment on the Council's amendment.

Amendment on the Council's amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I now move the following amendment on the Council's amendment—

That the word "clause" be struck out, and "Act" inserted in lieu.

The PREMIER: I hope the Committee will deal with the Council's amendment as it stands, and not agree to the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin. The idea of the Council's amendment is to exempt from taxation such expenditure as has been incurred in earning the dividend. That is perfectly reasonable and right. Deductions for all expenditure incurred in earning income other than dividends are already provided for. The carrying of the amendment on the amendment might mean that a man's weekly board could be deducted. So far as I know, every reasonable deduction is allowed already. It is true that members of Parliament are not allowed to deduct the cost of election campaigns, travelling expenses, and so forth.

Mr. O'Loghlen: The Commonwealth makes that allowance. You are spending a lot of money in order to let members see the country.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not wish to accuse the Premier of inconsistency, but he is inconsistent. The Council's amendment, subject to the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin, would put everybody on the same footing. The Council's amendment, which the Premier supports, provides only for deductions by people who receive dividends. All persons should be served alike. Every man who incurs expense for the purpose of earning income should be exempt as regards such expense. The Council's amendment, if agreed to, will give all the Premier wants; but it should apply to the other cases of similar character. Why should not a man be permitted to deduct the cost of travelling to and from his work? Members representing large country electorates are compelled to expend considerable amounts in travelling, for which they receive no allowance whatever in respect of income taxation.

Mr. Troy: The Commonwealth allows the travelling expenses of members.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin is a step in the right direction.

Mr. ANGELO: The Council's amendment deals solely with income derived from dividends. The "other expenditure" referred to would be such items as brokerage, stamps on transfers, and so forth. It is rather stretching the thing to seek to bring in here train fares, tram fares, and similar expenditure. However, I am prepared to consider a further amendment dealing with those matters.

Mr. PICKERING: This is scarcely the place to introduce such a drastic change as has been indicated, though personally I favour an amendment of the kind suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin. Members of Parliament should be allowed to deduct expenses incurred in the ordinary routine of their duties. Very few country members can carry out their Parliamentary work and see their districts without incurring travelling expenses of fully £100 a year. Moreover, country members of Parliament have to maintain two homes. The Commonwealth allows such deductions; and, in view of the high taxation we have to pay, it is only fair that the State should grant the same concession. It is not right that any member of the community should be compelled to pay on income that he really does not receive.

The CHAIRMAN: If the proposed amendment to the Council's amendment is carried, the whole clause will have to be redrafted. If hon. members refer to the marginal note, they will see these words, "Credit for payments under Dividend Duties Act 1902." If the Committee amend the clause, it will have to be redrafted, as the proposal is that it shall deal only with earnings from dividends.

Mr. Pickering: Do you rule the Council's amendment out of order?

The CHAIRMAN: No, but I am pointing out what the effect will be if the amendment moved by the member for Williams-Narrogin is carried.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Council's amendment should be accepted as it is, and if hon. members desire to move other amendments, they can do so when the Assessment Bill is before the House. There are other exemptions as well that should be considered. A man should be entitled to deduct medical expenses as well as other general charges.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think the Council's amendment is out of order. It deals with the assessment, and not the tax.

Mr. PICKERING: The Chairman might give his ruling as to whether the amendment is in order.

Mr. MUNSIE: We cannot move the amendment suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin to the amendment requested by the Council. The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that the Council's amendment is out of order. I think the first two lines of the amendment put it in order. The mere fact of our altering the Council's amendment as suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin will not assist him to get what he desires, nor yet will it help any other hon. member to get what he wants. Personally I am not prepared to grant favours in connection with income derived from dividends any more than I am in connection with income obtained from other sources.

The CHAIRMAN: I rule that the Council's amendment is in order and that it is competent for this Committee to deal with it.

Amendment on Council's amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	13
Noes	23

Majority against .. 10

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Heron	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lutey	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Marshall	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mann
Mr. Boyland	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Broun	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Carter	Mr. Piesse
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Sampson
Mr. George	Mr. Teasdale
Mr. Gibson	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Latham	Mr. Mullany
Mr. C. C. Maley	(Teller.)

Amendment on Council's amendment thus negatived.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope hon. members will not agree to the Council's amendment. Ever since I have been a member of this Assembly I have endeavoured as far as possible to treat every person equally. It is a wrong principle to adopt to give one section of the community the right to deduct expenses, etc., from their incomes, when that right is not given to others. This amendment will confer a special privilege on a favoured section of the community. Naturally such a proposal would come from the Legislative Council. I regret very much that the Legislative Council was not able to see that the position is that every person should be treated fairly in regard to income tax. There is no doubt that many people to-day pay taxes on income which they have not had the opportunity of using.

The Premier: The farmers, for instance.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not care whether those people be farmers, or labourers; they should be treated alike. This is designed to give exemption to a favoured class as against the masses.

Mr. TBOY: According to the Premier, no allowance is made to the farmer for expenses incurred in earning his income. Why, then, is the Premier asking the Committee to pass an amendment which allows a special deduction in favour of one section of the community? The amendment is intended to give the dividend collector, as against other classes, every possible deduction. It comes from another place, representing a favoured section of the community. The Chamber of Commerce have used their influence with another place to induce them to put up the amendment.

Mr. ANGELO: The advantage conferred by the amendment will not be restricted to a particular class. If a person using borrowed money erects houses with a view to earning income from rent, he is allowed an exemption for interest paid to the bank. So, too, with a carrier who purchases horses and vehicles with borrowed money. In the Act of 1918 the words "after all deductions allowed by law" were included, and conferred on the dividend holder an exemption for the interest paid. In the Act of 1919 those words were omitted, the Crown Law Department advising that they were unnecessary, that the income must be reducible by all deductions allowed by law. However, the Commissioner of Taxation took a different view, and would not allow the deduction. It is to put the question beyond all doubt that the amendment has been framed.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not agree with the member for Gascogne. Of course a man building a shop on borrowed money would be allowed a deduction for interest; but this is something more than that. Clause 5, taken in conjunction with the Council's

amendment, shows that the dividend collector is to have a special privilege. If a man builds a shop or buys shares on borrowed money, he is allowed to deduct bank interest.

Mr. Angelo: That is all the Council's amendment asks.

Mr. MUNSIE: Is it? This provides also for "other expenditure" incurred by the dividend collector. Where are those words going to land us? If the amendment be passed, the man with an income derivable from dividends will be able to pile up expenditure just as he likes. The Premier himself advised that those words should be struck out from the amendment. I agree with the Premier. I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of the Council's amendment the words, "or other expenditure" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Council's amendment as amended put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	19
Noes	17

Majority for	2
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AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Broun	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Carter	Mr. Piesse
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Sampson
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Gibson	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Latham	Mr. Mullany
Mr. C. C. Mailey	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Boyland	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Davies	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Heron	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

Council's amendment as amended, thus passed.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message received from the Council notifying that it had agreed to amendment No. 1 made by the Assembly, and to amendment No. 2 subject to modification, in which the Council desired the concurrence of the Assembly.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.30] in moving the second reading said: This proposal is not new to Australia. Already the Federal Parliament has passed a similar Act, and such an Act also operates in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. The experience of the past few years has shown that inquiries such as are proposed now have been beneficial. This has been so in connection with Federal works. Mr. Gregory, as chairman of the Federal Public Works Committee, has assured me, as a result of discussions I have had with him from time to time that these inquiries have resulted in good, in economical construction of works and in the saving of much money. This Bill is based on the Commonwealth and South Australian Acts. It is proposed that the scope of this Bill shall be widened as compared with those Acts. Not only will there be an inquiry into projected works but also an inquiry into matters connected with the management and working of existing public utilities and in connection with any other matters desired by Parliament. It is proposed that the committee shall consist of five members, two of whom will be appointed by the Legislative Council and three by this Chamber. Those members will be elected by either House and the Standing Committee will be for the life of Parliament. It is not proposed to pay any fees, but it is proposed to pay travelling expenses. The committee will have all the powers of a Royal Commission. It will have power to take evidence on oath, without which authority the work would be futile. The public utilities of the State are under special Acts, and to a very limited extent under Ministers. The Ministerial control of a great department like the railways must of necessity be limited. It is limited because the Act says it shall be limited. It can only be limited at any time. A considerable sum of money is received and paid away in small amounts, and there is a great deal of work in connection with the management of the railways which might be inquired into and about which the public might be given an opportunity of being heard. We shall have power to inquire fully into this question when the Bill is passed. When the inquiry is held we shall be able to hear the case for both sides. It is not intended to make any reflection upon officers controlling these public utilities. They are doing the best that is possible in the circumstances, but probably in many cases the public are being given services which the State cannot afford. At all events, the information will be useful to them, to the Government, and to Parliament. These reports will cover questions relating to the purpose or the necessity for, or advisability of, the works, the revenue capacity of the works, and their present or prospective value. It will be agreed that such an inquiry can only result in good.

An inquiry by a Minister is a very different matter. He cannot take evidence, but can merely inquire as to some grievance or place such a matter in the hands of his officials. This inquiry, however, will be more far reaching. We have discussed the earnings of these public utilities as if we were getting additional revenue from them. The gross earnings last year included in our revenue statements were £3,758,689, but the cost of earning this money was £4,473,489, showing a loss on the concerns last year of £714,800. Last year our deficit was £686,726, and allowing for the sinking fund contribution of £315,654, the actual shortage for the year was £371,072. The House should realise what little chance a Minister has of controlling in detail the management of these great concerns. He has no check upon them. It is highly unsatisfactory to every member of the House that there should be this enormous loss in connection with these concerns. I suppose every member will desire to know where the loss is and how it is occasioned, and what should be done to remedy the position. It is true that we contributed to the sinking fund £300,000 odd towards making up this loss, but the State still loses £371,000. On the ground of the necessity for inquiring into these public utilities the House should agree to the appointment of this committee. When we talk of balancing the revenue and expenditure, we must always keep in mind the loss in this connection. The position has been a serious one. I agree that we must sooner or later, and the sooner the better, square the ledger. I want to ask the House to tell me how I am to cover the loss in these concerns by taxation or by economy. I believe that in every department there is most rigid economy at the present time. It is possible that some officers could be retrenched and some services cut out and savings effected, but this would not mean anything material having regard to this loss of £714,000 on public utilities. I propose in this Bill to ask the House to give us an opportunity of fully inquiring into the working conditions appertaining to these public utilities. We should get better results from the money that is invested in them, and I think we can. Before we embark upon heavy taxation we should know if it is possible to save any portion of the loss by better control of our public utilities. The committee can be brought into use at any time whether the House is sitting or not. I do not know whether the public realise what our public utilities are costing. Someone said the other day we ought to contribute some portion of the cost of running the railways in order that freights might be reduced. Members must realise that we contributed nearly £600,000 last year towards the working of the railways, and that month after month we are contributing large amounts.

Mr. Troy: That is not done willingly. We could not get out of it.

The PREMIER: During the last two months things have been very bad with the

railways, but towards the end of the year the position should change very considerably.

Mr. Latham: They are doing well now.

The PREMIER: They are not. There is a little wheat coming down just now, but timber has been stopped for a long time. It is expected that traffic will be better very soon. It has been an unfortunate time for the railways. Trade has been at a standstill and there has been but little traffic carrying high freights. Freights generally seem to me to be high enough, but if we do not get the traffic the freight charges are of no benefit to the railways, and we must go on facing a loss. The position has been bad during the last few months, but particularly during the current month. We must square the ledger, and we must reduce the deficit considerably each year for the next few years until the ledger is balanced. We cannot do it this year or next year, but we must do something towards it. It does occur to me that we should see whether something cannot be done to show where this loss comes in. It is no use members telling the Government that they must economise and save money if no limit is placed upon the domestic expenditure. It has been determined that money must be spent on education, that schools must be kept open, that there must be expenditure on charities, and in the Medical and Health Departments. Under these few heads alone every penny of taxation has been absorbed. If that is so, there is very small chance of saving any considerable sum of money in our expenditure on ordinary works of Government, which amounts to about two millions a year. The Bill gives power to refer to this committee any expenditure over £20,000. The committee's report must in every case be made to the Legislative Assembly and not to the Governor except when it relates to such matters as I have mentioned, such as an inquiry into our public utilities, in which case the report may go to the Governor. We go further than the South Australian Act. We are asking for power for the Governor-in-Council to refer matters to this committee. The Commonwealth Act only provides for inquiries into proposed expenditure on projected works. We are seeking power to go further. In connection with our public utilities, there are many questions which might be submitted to the committee. We might ask them if the management of these public utilities is good and economical for the services rendered, if on present cost they are justified, and if we can increase the usefulness and use of our utilities by the development of land or other industries.

Mr. Harrison: You will have plenty of work for the committee.

The PREMIER: We might also ask if trade development will help us and when it will do so, and to what extent we are to apportion our loan expenditure for developmental purposes, and how much of the annual loss we can ask the general taxpayer to carry. Another question that may be referred to the

committee is: How much more, if anything, should the users of the utilities pay for the services they receive. There are some public services which are fairly general, such as harbours and railways, and others which are special to a locality, as, for instance, the water supply for the metropolitan area. All these questions could be referred to this committee, if they entailed considerable expenditure. As members will readily appreciate, a big sum has been spent in connection with our railways and trading concerns as well as in many other directions. Before any report is made by this committee to the Chamber, all those concerned should be heard. That, of course, would be the object of the committee. Some people may assert that the wheat grower should be charged more for the carriage of his wheat. Personally, I do not agree with that contention.

Mr. Harrison: It has been asserted already.

The PREMIER: Should an inquiry be held into that question, however, it would be only right to hear the farmers who could raise their objections to any such proposal. The same thing would apply to those affected by the rates on timber and other aspects in connection with these utilities. The State may be confronted with the necessity to spend large sums of money upon new works. We know that the future of this country is very big and broad in its outlook. The State is now almost without population. We have only 330,000 people in this vast territory. We must progress, however, and development will come in many places and in many directions. We have recently heard something about an oil discovery. Members will realise that there may be some expenditure suggested in connection with that discovery. Then again, we have heard of the discovery of a new coal seam in the Irwin River district. There may be expenditure required there. There may be new gold mines or other mines found, and all those must spell extra expenditure. There will probably be further agricultural and pastoral development, and particularly agricultural development away from existing railways. It may be that work will be necessary to pioneer the way to development, and, in these circumstances, there should be an inquiry. Had inquiries of such a nature been conducted into the construction of one or two of our existing works, in all probability we would not have spent the large sums of money we have in the past. It is certainly advisable that the committee should be appointed so that it will be in a position to make inquiries into the proposed expenditure. The amount proposed in the Bill is £20,000, or over. If the House were asked to authorise the construction, for instance, of 30 or 40 miles of railway, the expenditure, of course, would be much greater than £20,000.

Mr. Harrison: And you propose that all this work should be done gratis?

The PREMIER: I do, but I do not know whether the House will agree with me or not.

Mr. Willcock: I do not think it will.

The PREMIER: It will provide an opportunity for members to work for the good of the country.

Mr. Marshall: Or for the benefit of Ministers?

The PREMIER: It is not likely, for instance, that we shall often propose new railways. Perhaps there may be one each session of Parliament. An inquiry into public utilities justifying such an investigation would take perhaps a month or two, but I do not know that the committee would have so very much to do subsequently.

Mr. Latham: Do you think the appointment of such a committee will lessen the requests for select committees and Royal Commissions.

The PREMIER: Yes, I do. The committee will deal with many inquiries for which now select committees and Royal Commissions are sought. It will have all the powers of a Royal Commission and will be able to do all the work a Royal Commission can do. There are many other questions which the committee could deal with. For instance, it has been suggested from time to time that a two-foot gauge railway could be used in these days of dear material. To assist those who are doing the pioneering work outback, it has been suggested that the 3ft. 6in. gauge lines should be transferred to other parts. Another question, too, is as to whether road tractors can be used and so save money in connection with the construction of railways. It has been contended that harbour improvements will have to be made to meet the necessities of increased tonnage. There is also considerable expenditure in connection with water supplies in the city, while new tramways are asked for from time to time.

Mr. Pickering: Do you not intend to hand over the tramways to the local authorities?

The PREMIER: I hope so. Then, within the next four or five years, there will have to be an inquiry into the question of housing the Government departments. Probably the committee would find that, with the development of the city, the rental which could be received from the offices at present occupied, would pay interest on capital necessary to erect up-to-date buildings. That is a matter which is well worth an inquiry. In connection with the railways, the time comes when some lines are no longer carrying the traffic for which they were built. Probably they were built to open up some industry as, for instance, at a gold mining centre. The industry may have ceased in that locality and the line is there without the traffic to carry. If a proposal were made to remove such a line, which would not be used except to a very limited degree, the committee would be able to go into the matter and the people concerned would be given an opportunity to appear before the tribunal to give evidence to show why the line should not be taken away.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Is that one of the objects of the Bill?

The PREMIER: If it were proposed to pull up such a line, as, for instance, the Bullfinch line, the people concerned would be able to appear before the committee to oppose any such proposal.

Mr. Harrison: You are forecasting a lot of work for next year.

The PREMIER: There is no traffic on the Sandstone line. There is no disguising that fact.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The people will take it much better if the committee recommend it, than if the Government propose to do it themselves!

The PREMIER: It is right that such an opportunity should be given to the people concerned.

Mr. A. Thomson: Such a proposal will relieve the Government of a very nasty responsibility.

Mr. Lutey: Bullfinch will be a farming district soon.

The PREMIER: It will certainly relieve the Government of a certain amount of responsibility, but it will give the people concerned the opportunity of being heard. There is a difference between an inquiry by a Minister or a Government committee and the proposed public works committee. If it were proposed to take up the Bullfinch line, for instance—

Mr. Harrison: They are moving for an agricultural line there.

The PREMIER: I heard something about going too far East when the line touched Merredin, and now some one suggests farming at Bullfinch. At the same time, I think farming there will need to be very good farming.

Mr. Harrison: Last year the rainfall record at Westonia was practically equal to that at Merredin.

The PREMIER: Yes; the rainfall is heavier than we thought years ago. I do not know that I need say much more about this Bill. I have stated what it contains and what it is intended to do. It must be perfectly patent to everyone what the intention is. We have seen evidence of the workings of the Federal Act, for the Federal Public Works Committee comes here to inquire into the matters concerning Commonwealth works in this State. Nothing but good can come from the passing of this Bill, not only in connection with the existing works but in connection with all new proposals. After all, there should be some such opportunity given to some tribunal to inquire into these things, take evidence and report to the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon P. Collier, debate adjourned.

BILL—DREDGING LICENSE.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.57]: The object of this Bill

is to grant a lease for the dredging of shell in the Swan River, in order that lime may be burnt for building and agricultural purposes. Members will know that there is a large quantity of oyster shell to be secured from the river. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) informs me that bores have been put down 200 feet, and that those bores were still on shell. If there is such a large quantity of shell in the river it should be utilised. We propose that a lease shall be granted comprising 65 acres of the Swan River waters to Mr. H. W. Moss for the purpose I have mentioned. The lease is for a term of 21 years, and the area is 65 acres, and relates to three blocks. Two are just above the old causeway towards Guildford. There are two there because the septic tanks are in that locality, and it is necessary to protect them. For that reason, the block there has been cut into two parts, the area fronting the septic tanks separating them. The other is a little below the old causeway and on the opposite side of the river to Perth. The area there is 40 acres. The rent to be paid is £100 per annum, with a royalty of 3d. on every ton of shell raised. The minimum quantity to be raised each year is 20,000 tons. The expenditure on plant for the next 18 months, if the lease is granted, will be £5,000. There will be the usual conditions dealing with forfeiture, as well as provision for the Crown to do what dredging is necessary to keep the channels open. There is another provision whereby the Governor will be able to augment the boundaries of the leases in order to provide for the minimum output of 20,000 tons, but not to increase the area of the leases. If it were found that the shell was not present in sufficient quantities over this area, the leases could be moved to other sites. I have no doubt that the shell is present in quantity, because so far as it can be prospected, it has been prospected. But if there should be any shortage of shell, the measure contains power for the Governor-in-Council, without consulting Parliament, to change the site of the leases. We want this work undertaken, and we want it carried on continuously. The leases are to extend over a period of 21 years. I hope the House will realise that, in establishing this new industry, we shall be doing some good for Western Australia. The shell has been lying in the river for many years doing no good. There is a tremendous quantity of shell in the Swan River; it must have been a great place for oysters in the old days. It is possible to take this shell and burn it and put it to commercial use, and I hope members will realise that the measure, authorising the work to be done, is a fair one to the country and to those engaging in the industry. We shall obtain some little revenue without doing any harm to the river. There has been some objection to dredging; only recently the Minister for Works has had a dredger going, but it has not made the slightest difference to the water. I hope the House will approve of the Bill and that the

venture will be profitable to those engaging in it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1921-22.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 20th October; Mr. Angelo in the Chair.

Lands Department (Hon. Sir James Mitchell, Minister).

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £102,956:

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [6.5]: It seems somewhat ironical that I should have to move my motion for a reduction on lands and repatriation, but before doing so I wish to give the reasons which actuate me. I also wish to take the opportunity of thanking the "West Australian" newspaper for its kind and generous treatment and criticism of me, also for the information which it was able to gather with regard to the meeting of the Country Party held at Parliament House on Thursday last. The report stated—

A special meeting of members of the Country Party was held at Parliament House yesterday afternoon. . . . As it was generally known that some members of the party were displeased at the attack made by the Deputy Leader of the Party (Mr. A. Thomson) during the previous sitting on the financial policy of the Government, when he expressed his intention of moving a 10 per cent. reduction on each division of the Estimates, somewhat more than ordinary outside interest was taken in the gathering.

I am not going to enlighten the public as to what took place.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They used to surmise what we did at our meetings when we were in power. They always know what happens at a meeting.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is very amusing to find the Press making this statement—

While it is evident that the meeting was called for reasons unconnected with Mr. Thomson's speech, there is no room for doubting that the Deputy Leader's remarks were discussed at the gathering, and that in defence he had to repeat the declaration he made in the House that his strictures were made as a private member, and not as the official mouth-piece of the party which maintains the Government in power and provides half its Ministers.

The Minister for Works: How do they find out these things?

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is a rather amusing statement. I said in the House definitely and distinctly that I was speak-

ing as a private member, the member for Katanning.

Mr. Johnston: Which you had every right to do.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Quite so, being pledged to economy I had every right to voice my views. The "West Australian" was exceedingly generous in the latter portion of the paragraph, which stated—

In this connection it is significant that, though several divisions of the Estimates were passed last night, Mr. Thomson did not carry out his threat of moving for their reduction.

I regret that the Minister for Mines and Forests is not present because I made a promise to him, and I understood that he made a promise to me, that the Estimates would not be discussed until to-night. Having pledged my word, I would not move in the direction I had indicated. As an honourable man I had to abide by my word. On Thursday evening last the Minister came to me and said the Premier wanted to know whether I had any objection—

The Premier: The Premier did not want to know. He came to me and said he wanted to know.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I can only give the statement of the facts as I know them. The "West Australian" has accused me of not being game to stand up to the statement I made in this House, and I am justified in letting the Committee know what the position is. It does not affect the "West Australian," except that some people in the country might be influenced by the assertion that I had made a statement and was not game to stand up to it. I walked across to the seat occupied by the member for Subiaco (Mr. Richardson) and asked him to be good enough to lend me his copy of the Estimates for a few minutes, and I pointed out that I had no objection to the votes for the Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly, Joint House Committee, Joint Printing Committee, and Joint Library Committee, being proceeded with, but I preferred that the others should remain until Tuesday. I understood that was agreed upon. I may be wrong; I may have misunderstood the hon. member; I regret he is not present.

Mr. Richardson: You are not referring to me now. You borrowed my Estimates; that is all.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is so. I regret that the Minister for Mines is not here. I think the statement I have made will be borne out by the member for Subiaco that I did ask for his copy of the Estimates.

Mr. Richardson: Quite so, but your speech might imply that you made those further remarks to me.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The misunderstanding or breach of confidence was between the Minister for Mines and myself.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He is not worrying to-night.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No, he is having a good time. I do not think anything worries the Minister for Mines very much. He seems to make the most of life and I do not blame him because, after all, we have not too long to live in this world. However, I feel that I am justified in making the statement that the reason I did not take action on Thursday was that I had passed my word of honour I would do nothing until to-day.

The Premier: Was that to the Minister?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes.

The Premier: I do not know why he said that; there must have been some misunderstanding.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I expected to be told that there must have been some misunderstanding. The Committee can accept my statement or the statement of the Minister when he returns. I regret very much that he is not present. I never like to attack a man in his absence but, unfortunately, I have no other course open to me for the simple reason that it is my position as against his. In view of the statement made by the "West Australian," I think I am justified in making this explanation.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Never mind the paper.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Regarding the concluding portion of the paragraph, that the party, in pressing Mr. Harrison to retain the office of leader, had done so because of my attitude, this does not trouble me in the slightest degree. I also wish to inform members that, seeing there was a consensus of opinion, at least on the Government side of the House, that I was not able to dissociate myself as member for Katanning from the position of Deputy Leader of the Country Party, I tendered my resignation as Deputy Leader of the Country Party, because I refuse to be gagged by any party. I was returned pledged to support economies.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Was it accepted?

Mr. Johnston: It has not been accepted.

Mr. Willcock: Why gagged?

Mr. McCallum: The secrets of the caucus.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I wish to refer to the platform of the National Federation. During the recent elections quite a number of candidates in the metropolitan area stood as Nationalists, as they had every right to do. I wish to refer to a few of the planks of the National platform. The first is—

Finance—(a) Economy in administration, concentration of Government offices, legislation where necessary to admit of the reorganisation of departments, the amalgamation of all branches exercising similar functions and the encouragement of efficiency. (b) Taxation after making all possible economies, and in order to keep the State expenditure within the revenue, the introduction of a graduated income tax and other equitable taxation.

Mr. Mann: A good platform.

Mr. Marshall: Are you going over to it?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Clause 12 reads—

Parliamentary freedom.—Representative government, free discussion and action by members in Parliament who shall be responsible only to their electors.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Before tea I was reading certain matter which is part and parcel of the National Federation's platform, a platform on which quite a number of members of this Chamber have been returned.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was dealing with the Lands Estimates.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am explaining my position, and if you, Sir, will pardon my reading a little more of the platform, you will see the bearing of my quotations. Plank 12 of the platform is—

Parliamentary freedom; representative government; free discussion and action by members of Parliament, who shall be responsible only to their electors.

Before tea I was explaining to the Committee that to-night I am not speaking as deputy Leader of the Country Party but as member for Katanning, because I have tendered my resignation as deputy Leader, so that I may be in a position to voice my opinions on the basis of what I have quoted from the platform, and also on the basis of the following plank of the Country Party's platform:—

Mr. Johnston: Your resignation has not been accepted yet.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Plank 11 of the Country Party's platform reads—

Economical administration of Government departments and expenditure of public funds.

I thank the journalist who so very kindly showed me such generous consideration when he reported a certain meeting which was held. Now I should like to quote from a leading article published in the "West Australian" of the 28th September last—

The Minister for Education, according to the Estimates, promises to be content if allowed to spend only £39,786 more than the £490,160 spent by him last year. But, as, on the elapsed two months of the year, he has spent at a rate of nearly £50,000 in excess of last year's expenditure, we must defer judgment on the modest demands (modest for it) of the Education Department.

The CHAIRMAN: I must remind the member for Katanning that we are now dealing with the Lands Estimates. Whilst I desire to give every member the fullest possible latitude, there must be a line drawn. I fail to see what this quotation has to do with the Lands Estimates.

Mr. A. THOMSON: With all due respect to you, Mr. Chairman—

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member will confine himself to the question before the Chair, I shall be glad.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to state the reason why I propose to move at a later stage that 10 per cent. should be struck off the Estimates. Surely, Sir, I am entitled to state the reasons which animate me, more particularly seeing that a charge has been made against me by the Press of this State. Surely, Sir, I am to be permitted the privilege of defending myself and of explaining to this Committee and to the country—

The CHAIRMAN: Will the member for Katanning kindly resume his seat for one moment? I desire to point out to him that there is a time and place for him to refute charges made against him in the Press. I say emphatically that the Lands Department Estimates are before the Committee now and that I cannot permit discussion of any subject other than that before the Chair.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to state the reasons why I propose to move that these Estimates be reduced by 10 per cent. Am I permitted to do that, Sir?

The CHAIRMAN: So long as I hold the office which I hold by the will of the House, the hon. member is permitted to discuss, in its proper place, anything that comes before the Chamber. The hon. member is quite in order if he is dealing with the Lands Department.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I propose to state the reasons which actuated me in making my declaration of last week, that it is my intention to move a 10 per cent. reduction on each division. I want the Committee to give me at least a certain latitude, though I do not desire any special favour whatever. I propose merely to read a small portion of a leading article published in the "West Australian," and part of that article deals with the Lands Department. The article proceeds:—

It will be remembered, too, that the departmental expenditure of last year benefited to the extent of £40,000 by the civil service strike. Withal the departments anticipate spending in the aggregate less in 1921-22 than they did in 1920-21. That there is room for savings will be immediately acknowledged by the public. Has the Government the strength to achieve them; and, if it accomplishes no more than is indicated by the figures of the Estimates, will it be enough? In these days of a democracy come into its own, days when it is apparently the right of the Government departments to grow in personnel and expenditure, it will be doubtfully admitted that any ordinary Government is strong enough to reduce expenditure materially—until the crash comes.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Katanning cannot proceed on those lines. I have asked him to deal with the Lands Estimates. I have nothing whatever to do with any articles in the Press dealing with other departments.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I understand that in previous years—I am not disputing your ruling, Sir—when we came to a division of the Estimates we were allowed to discuss—

Hon. P. Collier: This is not a speech on the Budget. The hon. member could have quoted that last week, but he cannot do so now.

The CHAIRMAN: We are on the divisions now, and I will ask the hon. member to confine himself to the Lands Department.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to do that, and also endeavouring to show that economy is essential. I am endeavouring to state the reasons why I consider savings should be effected. If the Committee will permit me, I want to state my views in my own way, particularly as the Treasurer is the Minister administering this very department. The Lands Department exceeded its vote to the extent of £21,206 last year. I am not asking for any special favour; I just want to state the reasons which actuate me in moving that these votes be reduced by 10 per cent.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Is not that a subject for a want of confidence motion?

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is time we had one, anyhow.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The article proceeds:—

What may happen then is, of course, beyond any man's telling, unless he should, building the future on the past, conjure up pictures of soup kitchens and shelters. But that the Government is doing nothing—accepting the figures of the Estimates—will not be universally acknowledged. The Lands Department is included in the Estimates referred to.

The CHAIRMAN: I must rule the hon. member out of order.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member confine himself to the division before the Chair? Otherwise I must ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to confine myself to that division.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not doing so. The hon. member is defying the Chair.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The article further states—

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member please resume his seat? We have nothing to do at the present moment with any leading article generally discussing the Estimates. I have already informed the hon. member that I will try to give him every latitude, especially in view of what he has stated here this evening. The present, however, is not the time for a general discussion on the Estimates. The hon. member had the opportunity last week of generally discussing the Estimates. We are now dealing with divisions, and I want the hon. member to confine his attention to the vote before the Chair.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I maintain that I am doing so. I maintain that I have been dealing with the Estimates. The Lands Department Estimates are part of the Annual Estimates with which the Committee are dealing.

Mr. Mann: You have been discussing the Education Department.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No, I have not. It seems that hon. members are attempting to burke discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I was not reflecting on the Chair at all, but on the member for Perth.

Mr. Lambert: It is easier to pick on one man than the lot.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The leading article continues—

It may be doing all it, or any ordinary Government, can do; but it is not doing what a Cabinet of statesmen would accomplish.

I propose to move that the Estimates be reduced by 10 per cent.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What Estimates?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The whole of the departments controlled by the Minister for Lands and Repatriation. My reason for moving in that direction is that in my opinion it is essential the Committee should have an opportunity of discussing the Estimates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you move such an amendment as that, we can only discuss that amendment.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I intend to move it because my desire is that the Committee should give the Premier and his colleagues a definite instruction that they must make an effort to live within their means. Looking through the Estimates, I am struck with the large number of Government employees, and with the amount of money so expended; and it brings to my mind a statement made by the Minister for Works while the member for Sussex was on his feet—

We have not that much (snapping his fingers) control of the civil service to-day. I take it that in the Lands Department there are persons working under the Public Service Act and under the regulations framed by virtue of that Act. If this Chamber recommends that economies should be effected, the Chamber should endeavour to put into practice that which it preaches. The member for Sussex had the temerity to criticise the electric light supply, and thereupon we had the Minister for Works getting up and absolutely flaying that hon. member for merely attacking an item. Though, admittedly, there was a loss in that connection so far as the figures were concerned, yet the Minister of course proved to the satisfaction of the Committee generally—

The Minister for Works: The hon. member is not in order. I require that statement of his to be withdrawn, with an apology. I have nothing to do with electric lighting.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the point of order?

The Minister for Works: The hon. member said he heard me lecturing the member for Sussex because that member had the temerity to attack the electric lighting scheme. I had nothing to do with the electric lighting scheme and I did not badger the hon. member.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I regret I referred to the Minister for Works; I intended to refer to the Minister for Mines, who flayed the member for Sussex and said to his own satisfaction that a considerable saving had been effected by our having experienced a big loss over those works. That is the logic of the Minister for Mines. I will here quote a statement made by the Minister for Works with regard to the civil service. He said—

If members thought that Ministers had control over the civil service they were wrong. Ministers had very little control indeed and they could not have it until the people of the State woke up and let their members know that they were not prepared to go on paying taxes unless those engaged to do their work were prepared to give the fullest service that could be given to the State. There were some very fine and splendid men, good loyal servants, in the service. There were also a lot of men who might be very good and very loyal, but who had a very funny way of showing it. He appreciated to the fullest extent a number of the men who had worked for him for the past five years.

They knew their jobs and they were loyal. Ministers have declared that it was quite impossible to reduce the Estimates by one farthing, that they were cut to the bone. I have no doubt we shall have the same statement again. We are faced with an estimated deficit of £570,000, towards which this particular division is the contributing factor. We see that the employment of civil servants temporarily involves £72,856, and the employment of civil servants permanently £402,892, or a total of £475,478. Taking into consideration the enormous expenditure that the State is put to, I trust that the Committee will see fit to accept the amendment I intend to submit. I stated clearly the other night that I was not endeavouring to force the Government to accept an amendment such as this as one of want of confidence, but that in view of the serious state of the finances, we should have a better explanation than had been given to Parliament by the Premier. I discussed this matter with an ex-Treasurer of the State and I asked him what possible means there were of curtailment of the abnormal expenditure. I told him that from my own experience, in the past 5½ years in Parliament, dealing with individual items had proved a failure. The member for Pilbara when a Minister of the Crown, said when threatened with a reduction of his vote that he did not care, and that he would spend the money if it was wanted, or words to that effect.

Mr. Willecock: He was always a Bolshevik.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He did not forget the qualification, "If it was wanted."

Mr. A. THOMSON: We are alleged as a Committee of this Parliament to be custodians of the public purse. We are presented with the Estimates and we are told that we are expected to pass them, and if an hon. member submits a motion such as I intend to move, the Government declare that it is tantamount to a vote of want of confidence. If we are not to be permitted to reduce a division—we certainly have no authority to increase it—then in Heaven's name what is the good of presenting the Estimates to us? We might as well sign a blank cheque and hand it to the Government. If members turn to page 58 of the Public Accounts, they will see that since 1911 there has been an ever-increasing deficit, until we have an accumulated deficit of £4,773,430. It is time, therefore, that Parliament gave a definite instruction to the Government, not as a vote of want of confidence, but as an intimation that we, as members, are prepared to stand solidly behind them to assist in combating the civil service who to-day are apparently running the country.

Mr. Mann: Nonsense.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why not move your motion.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I intend to do so. If an hon. member makes a bald statement or moves a bald motion, to the effect that a vote be reduced, and gives no reasons, members will declare "Why do you not give reasons?"

Mr. Mann: Why do you not support the statement that the service is running the country?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The statement was made by the Minister for Works.

Mr. Lambert: And yours is just a repetition of his bald statement.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is probably a statement of the experience of the Minister.

Mr. Mann: It was an individual case and you are making it apply to the whole service.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I suppose we shall have the reply from the Premier in connection with the Estimates that he has gone closely into everything and that he found it impossible to reduce the votes by one penny piece.

Mr. Mann: Will you doubt that?

Mr. A. THOMSON: If members will turn to Public Accounts they will find that in every case the votes have been excessed.

Mr. Lambert: Do you want to go to the country?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I shall not be afraid. If the Government accept this as a vote of want of confidence, that will be their business. The estimated deficit is £570,000. The position with most Treasurers is that they are quite willing to economise, but the trouble is with their Ministers. That statement too was made the other day by Mr. Watson, at one time Prime Minister of Australia. A statement like that, however, cannot very well apply to the vote we are discussing. It was pleasing to hear the Premier say when

introducing the Public Works Committee Bill that an attempt must be made to square the ledger. But I have heard that statement for the last seven years. I heard it when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting on this side of the House. It is time, however, we made a firm effort to reduce the expenditure. I assure the members who represent the South-West that I am just as keen on bringing about the development of that part of the State as any other hon. member. The same remark applies to the North-West, and in fact to every part of the State. I am not small-minded. I have been through the South-West. Some hon. members think I am opposed to that part of the State because I asked some questions with regard to the probable cost of the proposed tour.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member's remarks have nothing to do with the Estimates, and with all respect to him I must ask him to confine what he has to say to the business before the Committee.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Surely a reference to the proposed trip to the South-West—

The CHAIRMAN: Has nothing to do with these Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: If the hon. member wants to move a motion of no-confidence, let him do so straight out and that will give him the fullest possible scope.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have no desire to do that, but I do desire the Committee to assist me in an honest endeavour to reduce the deficit.

Mr. Lambert: The hon. member should know that the Dr. Page stunt is played out.

Mr. Angelo: Do you advise him to turn over a new page?

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with the Lands Department Estimates, not with Dr. Page or anybody else.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by 10 per cent.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot accept such an amendment. The hon. member must move to reduce the vote by a specific amount.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £10,000.

Hon. P. Collier: You are giving away a little by doing that.

The CHAIRMAN: I will put the hon. member's amendment at the conclusion of the general debate.

The Premier rose to speak.

Mr. Angelo: The Premier submitted the vote. If he speaks now, will that close the debate?

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.0]: I would like to know what will be the proper time to submit amendments, because I intended to move considerable reductions on some of these divisions. I desire a ruling now. Last year we did not get a proper ruling. I withdrew my motion to reduce the Education Department

Estimates until after the items had been discussed, and then I was told that the items having been passed, it was not possible to reduce them. I do not want a repetition of that. There is before the Chamber an amendment that the Estimates be reduced by £10,000.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot take that amendment until the close of the debate.

Hon. P. Collier: That shuts out consideration of the items.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That gags us. We must have an opportunity to move an amendment.

Hon. P. Collier: When the Chairman is putting the Vote, that will be the time.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: As soon as the items have been passed, the Chairman will say we cannot move to reduce the total amount because we have passed the items.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, you can. The question I have before me is the Estimates of Lands and Surveys. The proper course is to deal with the general discussion first, and then with the items. When we come to the last item I will put the amendment moved by the member for Katanning. If any hon. member thinks my way of doing the business is not correct, let him move accordingly.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Every motion before the Chamber is subject to having an amendment moved upon it. The question before the Chamber now is that the Vote, Lands and Surveys £102,956, be passed. That is subject to amendment, and the amendment moved by the member for Katanning is that it be reduced by £10,000.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not accepting that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I think you ought to.

The CHAIRMAN: Then move that my ruling be disagreed with. I say I will not accept the amendment.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Then I suppose I am out.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, down and out.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I take it we can reduce the items if we like, but no matter what items we reduce we have to pass the whole amount. Will you give a ruling the other way, and say that when we have gone through the items we can then move for a reduction of the total amount?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, that is my ruling.

Mr. E. H. ANGELO (Gaseoyne) [8.5]: Whilst I am not supporting the amendment moved by the member for Katanning, I think the Premier has laid himself open to criticism. We have here a most important division, the Estimates of a department with ramifications from Cape Londonderry in the North to Eucla in the South; from Steep Point in the West to the South Australian boundary on the East; and yet the Premier has not given us one word as to the administration and activities of this department during the past 12 months. Last year the Premier told us of many reforms and new work entered upon by the department. I was

anxious to hear to-night the result of those enterprises. Of course the Premier gave us a certain amount of information in his Budget speech, but there are many matters which he failed to touch upon. I hope that in his reply to this debate the Premier will give us information on those points. A party of members is to be taken through the South-West this week. Before we enter upon that trip I should like to hear from the Premier the policy which should be followed in developing the South-West. If he will tell us that before we start, members making the trip will be able to judge of the policy as they go through the country; but unless we know the Premier's intentions before we set out, we may miss a great many points which he wishes us to consider while we are in the South-West. Last year the Premier told us the pastoral lands of the North-West were being classified. When the Premier was in the North-West a deputation enumerated to him a lot of mistakes which had been made in that classification, and stressed the unfairness of some of the imposts placed on the pastoralists. It was pointed out that in some instances adjoining lands showed a difference in assessments of from 25 to 30 per cent. Repeatedly have I been asked what the Government are doing in regard to the classification of those lands, and I have had to reply that probably we would be told all about it by the Premier when he spoke on the Estimates of the Lands Department. The Government acknowledge mistakes were made in the classification, and are rectifying some of them, but we want to know exactly what the Government are doing in connection with the assessments as a whole.

The Premier: You have the appeal board.

Mr. ANGELO: Of what use is that? We would like to know what extra rents the Government are receiving through the assessments. When the Bill went through the House it was anticipated that the pastoral lands would produce double rents. In some instances the rents have been increased fourfold. That is one of the points which the Premier might well have explained to us on these Estimates. He told us last year that a classification was being made of a large area between Burracoppin and Ravensthorpe. We should like to know what has been done there? He also told us of a considerable area of good land east of Wagin which he said was being classified. We should like to know what is being done there also. Yet no information whatever is available. We are told in the Press that a new port has been selected between Wyndham and Derby. Perhaps the Premier will expound to us his policy for the development of that part of the State and the settling of the huge areas of magnificent pastoral country up there. We are told that the Government are going to develop the eastern wheat belt and also the South-West, but we have not heard anything about the utilising to its fullest extent of the magnificent pastoral country north of Geraldton. The rabbits are rapidly increas-

ing in portions of the North. If they are allowed to spread much further a lot of the lands at present valuable will not be returning revenue to the Government much longer. Also the dingoes are rapidly increasing in the North. Unless action be taken to check these pests it will not be long before the lands up there lose all their value. I am told that some of the pastoralists of the North will shortly have to leave their holdings unless something be done to eradicate the dingoes. On one station alone they have trapped hundreds of dingoes during the last 12 months.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why do they not appoint a vermin board?

Mr. ANGELO: They have a vermin board, but the difficulty is the huge areas belonging to the Crown, which serve as breeding grounds.

Mr. McCallum Smith: How did they keep down the pest in the past?

Mr. ANGELO: Probably the explanation is that the rabbits have been breeding very fast and so providing the dingoes with something to live on.

Mr. Munsie: The dingo will not eat wild rabbit.

Mr. ANGELO: I should like to have heard from the Premier some information in respect of the item "Clearing by traction engine, £20,000." I hope the Premier will tell us something about that.

The PREMIER: Do you want me to discuss every item?

Mr. ANGELO: No, but it has been the custom that a Minister, in introducing the Estimates of important departments furnishes a little information as a guidance to members in their deliberations. I hope it is not yet too late for the Premier to relent and tell us something about the Estimates of this important department.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [8.15]: It is news to me to hear of the increase of rabbits in the North. I understood that the only rabbits in the North were all in the hon. member's own electorate. Years ago we spent £60,000 erecting a fence up there.

Mr. Angelo: The pastoralists erected that fence.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Don't say too much about it. It smells too strongly.

The PREMIER: What does?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The fence.

The PREMIER: We are told that rabbits are increasing in number on stations in the North. That is the first I have heard of it. It is an extraordinary thing that this should be so and that we should not know anything about it. I do not believe that rabbits have increased in the North of late. With regard to the question of classification mentioned by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), we have to await the report of the officer who has had charge of the work, and when it comes to hand, we shall be able to say what

is to be done with the land. We have classified a tremendous area of the pastoral lands in the North and they have been appraised. This House appointed a board to do that work. It is not a question for the Government. The hon. member said in some cases the rentals have been doubled. The land is worth the double rent in many instances. It would probably average a double rent all over the State, but not more.

Mr. Latham: Are you opening up any more land in smaller holdings?

The PREMIER: It is proposed that the Kimberleys shall be thrown open in blocks of 250,000 acres, but there is nothing to prevent a man taking 20,000 acres or less if he likes. The classification of this land has cost money. The work was ordered by the House. It has cost an enormous amount, and something like 109 million acres were classified last year by an army of inspectors. That area was classified in order that the rentals to be paid might be fixed. When the Bill was first passed the work should have been undertaken at once. When it was undertaken we had to put on a number of men at great cost to the State. The longer the work remained undone the more difficult did the position become. The pastoralists have to pay increased rent for the years that have passed. This has amounted to a good deal, and many of them have not liked it. We also struck the time when the wool was practically unsaleable.

Mr. Angelo: What extra rents do you expect to impose?

The PREMIER: Probably it will be double rent over the whole area.

Mr. Angelo: Much more than double rent.

The PREMIER: The land around Carnarvon has been appraised, and the hon. member knows what the rents are. I have indicated what has happened in regard to the classification of land in the wheat belt. It was said at one time that I had gone too far east with land settlement, and now hon. members want us to go further. We have classified the land around Lake Grace. If the classification justifies the subdivision of the land, that work will be done. We have located some 400,000 or 500,000 acres of good land, but it is not well situated in regard to a railway.

Mr. Latham: Has any of the land been thrown open?

The PREMIER: No, it will not be thrown open until we see whether the land beyond justifies the construction of a railway. I am not going to put men out there until we can guarantee them a line, and I cannot ask the country to spend the money on a new railway just now.

Mrs. Cowan: Will you tell us something about the Avon Valley lands?

The PREMIER: If the hon. member knows anything about the Avon Valley that I do not know, I shall be pleased to answer her questions. I have lived there for 30 years. If there is any unused land in that locality it will be put into use. The hon. member knows

very little about the subject. We have been told that there were three million acres of land in the Avon Valley. There may be one million acres of first class land. There is other land available extending from Dowerin to Beverley, but it is largely second or third class land. There is some unused land, but nothing like two or three million acres.

Mrs. Cowan: I am only going on the report of the department.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is not doing so. She did not read the report carefully. Wherever I turn, since that report came out, people ask me about the land around Northam. If there is any unused land around Northam, I do not know of it.

Mr. Johnston: What about York?

The PREMIER: There may be some around York. Land to the west of the Avon River is not first class land. I do not propose to ask people to go on the land when it is not first class, and when they are people with very small capital. Hon. members will have an opportunity during the session of dealing with the question of land which is not used.

Mr. Willecock: This is the time to give us the policy of the Lands Department.

The PREMIER: We can get a few men to go on the land to-day. There is in Perth a population of 160,000. They are content to say, "You take this unused land and have it brought into use." I say so, too, but from what source are we to get the population to go there? It will not come from the 160,000 in Perth. Will 40,000 of those people go out into the country?

Mr. Willecock: Give them the chance.

The PREMIER: The question is whether they would go out or not. Perhaps some of them would do so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you get the city people against you as well as the country people where will you be?

The PREMIER: Let 40,000 of the people of Perth go on the land. I am glad hon. members are making a trip to the South-West. The position so far as the wheat belt is concerned was well understood after the trip that was made last year. Hon. members since then have been content to have this part of the State developed. The trip, however, did a good deal of good.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is an entirely different proposition for the settler.

The PREMIER: There was some doubt until last year, as to whether it was wise to settle men in that belt. The trip not only convinced members but it convinced the people of the country, because members had seen it and had talked with the farmers and told the people what they had seen and heard. This completely changed the outlook of those on the wheat belt. It is necessary that members should have a similar opportunity to see the South-West. If we go further east there is a good deal of first class land, but outside that there is not much else than second class land. I will not settle any persons on other than first

class land. In the South-West members will see what it is possible to do in that part of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some of the best land in Australia is situated there.

The PREMIER: Undoubtedly, and it is the best climate in Australia. There is some of the best land to be had anywhere.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Some of it would break a man's heart.

The PREMIER: It is a difficult job, but it can be got over by men working together and getting their farms into working order. It should not be a difficult task under the group system when men can assist each other in clearing the farms. Hon. members will go to Pinjarra, and there see the groves of orange trees and other development work that has been done. Further south they will see the small settlements, and will be able to judge for themselves as to what can be done. Practically all along the coast line they will see the drainage that has been made, and the roads that have been constructed. We can settle a great many people between here and Augusta and Bridgetown. When hon. members return no doubt they will be able to judge as to whether it is better to settle people on that land, or whether it is better to resume land between Perth and Bunbury and subdivide it. We have made a start. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) knows that a considerable number of men are working down there on large estates. I hope the policy to be approved by the House will be the settlement of the land between Perth and Albany. I hope every acre of good land will be settled and used, and that there will be butter factories established just as there are in New Zealand and in the Eastern States. It is no use members thinking that we cannot do as well in the South-West as in the Eastern States. We can do so. The land is uniformly good, and there is a great deal of it which must be brought into cultivation. Magnificent opportunities exist down there for the settler. It is the cheapest land in the world to-day. If it costs money to develop, it is worth spending money on. People could live a happy life down there, and have the best climate that it is possible to find. If men are willing to go down there and work, I am willing to help them. Some people are anxious to go there, and they will be sent there as soon as possible. We ought to settle thousands of people there during the next year or two. There ought not to be one pound of butter or one ounce of produce brought into Western Australia from the other States. For years past we have been spending two million pounds annually on bringing produce from the Eastern States. If this sum of money were spent in the South-West I think we could produce all we need for our own requirements. It is worth while spending money with that end in view.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [8.30]: I do not know what is intended by the amendment indicated by the Deputy Leader of the Country Party.

Mr. Johnston: The ex-Deputy Leader.

Mr. A. Thomson: I resigned.

Mr. LAMBERT: I understood that the resignation had not been accepted, and that the member for Katanning was still the Deputy Leader of the Country Party.

Mr. Underwood: The Leader is back.

Mr. LAMBERT: Whether or not he is the Deputy Leader of the Country Party for the time being, the Government cannot get away from the significance of his expressed intention to move to reduce each division by 10 per cent. Either the member for Katanning is merely attempting to fire a blank cartridge or he is attempting to take the administration of the Lands Department out of the hands of the Premier. He has not indicated whether it is his intention merely to move his drastic motion, or whether it is his intention to take the administration of the department away from the Government. I think that the Premier is rather stultifying his Government when he takes a drastic amendment of this description in pained silence.

The Premier: He has not moved it.

Mr. LAMBERT: He has indicated what his intention is.

The Premier: Let us discuss it when he does move it.

The CHAIRMAN: There can be no discussion on such a motion when it is moved.

The Premier: Can I not reply to him?

Mr. LAMBERT: No, that is the ruling that has been given.

The Premier: We are in Committee and I can speak again.

Mr. LAMBERT: No, the decision was to the contrary. If it is not the intention of the member for Katanning to take the administration of affairs out of the hands of the Government, what is his intention?

Mr. A. Thomson: To try to effect economy.

Mr. LAMBERT: As a matter of fact, the member for Katanning knows full well that the only way he can effect economy is by discussing the items included in the Estimates, and dealing with them seriatim. The member for Williams-Narrogin shakes his head dubiously, but how would those hon. members apportion the decrease, if the proposed amendment were agreed to.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is where we leave administration in the hands of the Government.

Mr. LAMBERT: What would the hon. member propose if the department were to build a bridge in the South-West which cost, say, £1,000 and with the decrease off, £100 might be left? Does he suggest that the department should build, say, two pillars and leave the rest?

Mr. Underwood: The Lands Department does not build bridges.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am putting that proposition forward as a simple example. Mem-

bers can see how absurd it is to contend, as the member for Katanning has contended, that he desires economy, and to leave matters at such a stage. We have a right to know whether the hon. member is frank and honest in his desire to effect economy.

Mr. A. Thomson: You wait and see.

Mr. LAMBERT: If it is his intention to effect economy as outlined by the member for Pilbara, he is entitled to move for a reduction in connection with certain items, and to show his desire to effect economy by constructive criticism, indicating how that economy can be effected.

Mr. A. Thomson: And get blown out every time.

Mr. LAMBERT: At any rate, the hon. member would thus show his earnest desire to effect economy as a supporter, or alleged supporter, of the Government, by his constructive criticism. On the other hand, we find the member for Katanning, who, as far as I know, is deputy Leader of the Country Party, on the support of which section of the House, the Government is held in office under sufferance, indicates that he will move for a 10 per cent. reduction on every Vote, irrespective of the possible economy to be effected. To my mind, his intention is merely to harrass the Government and force the Ministry into an impossible position. I am surprised that the Premier has allowed this discussion to go on. We had a similar set of circumstances in the Federal Parliament the other day. I do not know whether the Leader of the Country Party there has been deposed as well, but Dr. Page—

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing Dr. Page.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am merely outlining a similar action in the Federal House to that which has taken place before this Committee. We find that in the Federal House, Dr. Page has moved for a certain reduction in the Estimates on the same lines as this responsible, or irresponsible, action taken by the member for Katanning. In the Federal House, Dr. Page said he did not desire his amendment to be taken as a vote of no-confidence in the Government, nor did he intend to endeavour to take the control of affairs out of the hands of the Federal Government. That is exactly the position in which we find ourselves in this Chamber. We have the deputy Leader, or alleged deputy Leader, of the Country Party doing exactly the same thing where the present Government are concerned here. As to whether the member for Katanning is the deputy Leader of his party or not—

Mr. A. Thomson: I should be the best judge of that.

Mr. LAMBERT: Some hon. members say that the hon. member's resignation has not been accepted. I think for the sake of this country, it would be regrettable if the hon. member's resignation were accepted for reasons which I am not permitted to state. The Country Party, which is allied to the Government, is virtually taking the administration out of the hands of the Government party.

Mr. Johnston: Not the Country Party.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know whether that is true or not. As a matter of fact, that party's politics and actions are of such a hotch-potch character that it would be impossible for me to state what their intentions are.

Mr. Latham: Are you speaking for your party?

Mr. LAMBERT: That applies to both their actions and motives in politics and in most other things.

Mr. Latham: I do not know what you are speaking of.

Mr. LAMBERT: Nor do I wish the hon. member to know. When he understands what I am speaking about—

Mr. Willecock: You will be falling off.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is the position. It is regrettable that the Premier has not attached due significance to this threat by a section of the Country Party as embodied in the remarks by the member for Katanning. That hon. member has a right, as an individual member of this Chamber, to move in any direction he likes. In this instance, the significance of his expressed intention is minimised by the fact that he has, within the last 24 hours, resigned his position as Deputy Leader of the Country Party. With the material provided by the member for Katanning, I cannot support a general reduction as he has indicated. I am prepared to listen to any member of the Committee in discussing the various items, provided he has special knowledge of the subject under discussion and offers constructive criticism to show how economy may be effected. The Government, without stultifying themselves, could accept a reduction in certain items under such circumstances, but when a cheap, comic opera move of this description regarding the intention to reduce the Votes by 10 per cent. is witnessed, I regret that the Premier views it in a casual way as though he were saying: "Let the boys have a little bit of fun. I will not take any notice of it." If that is to be the attitude, I do not know that we should take these Estimates seriously at all. I believe the only way by which economy may be effected in connection with departmental administration, is to take each item and for some member with special knowledge, to indicate in what direction economy may be effected and move for a decrease accordingly. To merely fire a blank cartridge at the Government and make a bald, bold statement that the item should be reduced by 1 per cent., irrespective of its effectiveness or possibility, is not giving a lead to members generally. It savours either of a blank cartridge or an attempt to take the administration of affairs out of the hands of the Government. The Premier and the Committee have a right to know what is the intention of the member for Katanning. So far, the member for Katanning has merely dealt with generalities and he has not indicated one single item where economy can be effected. No doubt some members have specific knowledge regarding

some portions of the Estimates and the criticism of such members would be listened to by the Committee. The affairs of Government should not be taken out of the hands of the Government in this slipshod fashion, without more notice being taken of the action.

The Premier: I do not propose to take notice of it.

Mr. LAMBERT: I believe that if the Premier did take this amendment seriously, he would immediately move the adjournment of the House to consider his position and whether one or two of his supposed supporters were going to run the country or whether he was to control the different departments of State. We may have a mining man, such as the member for Claremont, who has a special knowledge on that subject, stating that he will move a general reduction upon the Estimates under the heading of mining. The Government have not so many supporters that they could disregard the opinions and utterances of the member for Claremont if he made a similar threat and the Government took it seriously. It is not likely that the member for Claremont would make a bald threat of that description without having due regard for its significance. Apparently the member for Katanning has not due regard for the significance of his utterances but he has no desire to harass the Government. I do not think the Committee will take much notice of the bald statements made by him. It would be regrettable if we did. It is right that all members of this Committee should pay due attention to the utterances of any hon. member who has special knowledge enabling him to suggest where economies might be effected. I have not heard that economy could be effected in the slightest degree. I can only take the hon. member's unexpressed intention in one way and that is that he has no desire to harass the Government, and that he does not really wish for any result from the amendment he intends to move. I know there are certain members who might move for individual reductions which will probably meet with the approval of the Committee.

Hon. P. Collier: May I make a suggestion, Mr. Chairman. I think members of the Committee ought to be aware that they are engaged in a general discussion which is a motion of no-confidence, and perhaps some of them are not acquainted with the fact that there will not be an opportunity of discussing it later on when the hon. member moves his amendment.

The Premier: I was under that impression.

Hon. P. Collier: I gathered from the remarks of the Premier and the fact that he did not make any reference at all to the proposed amendment and seeing that it could only be regarded as a no-confidence motion, that he was under the impression that he would have an opportunity of dealing with the amendment when it was submitted. I think it would be well to make it clear to the Committee that now is the only opportunity members will have on a general dis-

cussion to deal with the proposed amendment of the member for Katanning. When it is moved finally, it will have to be put without discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: That is so.

Mr. Johnston: Under which Standing Order?

The CHAIRMAN: Under my ruling of last year and two years ago, which ruling was supported by the House.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the ruling has been established by the House and agreed to in the past. It is not for me to decide that, but I think members ought to be aware of the position.

The Premier: I was certainly under that impression.

The CHAIRMAN: The position is exactly as the Leader of the Opposition has outlined it. The work before the Committee is the general discussion on the division Lands and Surveys, and at the close the Premier has the right of reply, but before putting a vote I will put the amendment outlined by the member for Katanning and it cannot be discussed.

Hon. P. Collier: It can be discussed now on the general discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, it can be discussed now. I do not put the vote until all the items in the division have been dealt with, and then I put it and no discussion can take place after I put it.

Mr. A. Thomson: I take it that I shall be permitted to reply.

The CHAIRMAN: No, you will not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [8.49]: I am quite sure the temper of the House is that, if any practical suggestion could be made showing how the reduction of £10,000 could be brought about, members would be prepared to give it serious consideration. Members should glance through the items and see where they can effect a reduction of 10 per cent. If they take any of the items of salaries, it is out of the power of the House to reduce them. They have been fixed.

Mr. A. Thomson: Are you satisfied that every employee is required?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Wait a minute and I will satisfy the hon. member on that. If members take any of the items of salaries, they will find they have no power to reduce them. If they did reduce them, they would stultify the actions of previous Parliaments which placed the power of fixing salaries first in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner and then in an appeal court which enabled the decision to be ratified, extended or otherwise dealt with. Taking some other items by way of illustration, there is one "Clearing by traction engine, firewood cutting, etc., £20,000." If we deducted £2,000 from that, the hon. member's object would not be attained. It would simply mean that in these days, when unemployment is staring us in the face quite strongly enough for me, the reduction would simply reduce employment; and any such proposal as that is not

likely to receive the hearty assent of the Committee. Besides, it would reduce the £28,000 revenue accruing through this work. There is another item, "Surveys Generally, £5,000." Ten per cent. off that would be £500. Again there are two reasons which prevent the Committee from voting for such an amendment, firstly, the undesirability of reducing employment, and secondly because the Lands Department cannot proceed with its work unless surveys are carried out.

Mr. Lambert: So you consider it a vote of no-confidence.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Do not try to camouflage the thing. I am serious. Then, it might be argued, could not we reduce the number of men? This is a question which only the Minister or the Public Service Commissioner could answer. If it were possible to reduce the number of men, again we would be faced with the question of unemployment. A further question arises, are we keeping on men who are really not required in order not to reduce employment? Certainly we are not, as in the ordinary course of administration, reductions are taking place in every one of our departments. I have listened with considerable attention to the remarks of the member for Katanning. Putting on one side a lot of the matters, the wisdom of mentioning which is a matter of judgment, though I concede his earnestness in endeavouring to impress on the Government and on the country that he is alive to the necessity for economy and reducing expenditure wherever possible, I can say that the Estimates of my department have been cut down to bedrock, and this being so, it is only fair to assume that the Estimates of the other departments have been cut down in the same way. Unless matters with regard to finances become more favourable than they are at present, even with my attenuated staff, I should have to consider whether I could keep them on or should have to put them off, because of the comparative shortness of work, unless the amounts provided for in the Estimates are available. Even when passing men out of the department, it is necessary to have the money to pay them not merely the salary due to the date of their leaving, but the compensation to which they are entitled under the regulations. I can assure the hon. gentleman that if a reduction in the number of men was made in any of these departments, the sum of money which would have to be paid by way of compensation and to which they are entitled—I do not dispute that for a single moment—would be a very considerable item indeed, and an excess Bill would be necessary to meet it. I do not wish to say anything more. I only wished to point out that if a suggestion were put forward the Committee would be entitled to know and to feel that it was put forward with the object not merely of effecting a reduction, but of effecting a reduction which would be of value and where such reduction could be made without detriment to the carrying on of necessary work. Such a suggestion

should be practical. It is of no use putting up a proposal and saying it will apply, if it will not apply. It is of no use proposing a reduction of 10 per cent. as the hon. member has done.

Mr. A. Thomson: Tell me how we can arrive at it.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member has put up the 10 per cent. proposal. I am not arguing for it. I am only telling the hon. member that his proposal is not practicable. As a practical man he knows that in building a house it is necessary to see that the requisite materials, iron, nails and so forth, are available, and so in dealing with these Estimates, before putting up a drastic proposal of this sort, he should show how the object can be attained. It is impossible for a 10 per cent. reduction to be made on these Estimates.

Mr. Underwood: You are not allowed to put up any case for a reduction under the Standing Orders.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know about that. The hon. gentleman had an opportunity to explain, and though he occupied a considerable amount of time, he did not put forward a practical suggestion. Why suggest deducting 10 per cent.? Why not say 50 per cent. or 100 per cent.? Any proposed reduction of the Estimates should be within the range of practical politics, and the putting forward of a reduction of 10 per cent. as the hon. member has done is neither practical nor is it politics.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [8.57]: I do not know how the Government propose to take the amendment by the member for Katanning, but there have been some indications that it is regarded as a vote of no-confidence. I wish to state my position clearly. The Government represent both the Country Party and the National Party, and it is the duty of the Country Party, if they are satisfied that the administration of the country is not being carried on economically, to take the first opportunity to put things right. If they can prove that the Government are not deserving of the confidence of the House, inasmuch as the administration is not being conducted on the soundest lines, I will vote with them. Although I sit in Opposition here, and there is no prospect of this party coming into office, I am prepared to see the best available men occupying the Treasury bench. But I have an objection, and I think most of us have an objection, to members of any party moving motions such as that of the member for Katanning, while declaring that they have no responsibility for the existence of the Government. The Country Party in the Federal Parliament occupy a position very similar to that of the Country Party here; and they pretend from time to time that they have no responsibility. They assist in the formation of a Government, and then adopt the policy of standing aloof and harassing the Government. But they are, in fact, part of the Government. If the Country Party

in this Assembly are dissatisfied, they ought to take the first opportunity of reconstructing the Government, their own Government, and putting better men in the places of the present Ministers. What about this kite-flying of the member for Katanning? The hon. member takes the pose of a strong man standing out for economy. But our experience is that the man who puts himself forward as the strong man, almost invariably, upon getting into office, proves a failure. At the same time, if this comes to a vote of want of confidence, I will vote against the Government. Now, the amendment asks that there shall be a 10 per cent. reduction in the Vote; and yet the amendment comes from a member of a party who insist upon a progressive land policy, upon the settlement of what they term the vast areas of the State. Such a policy cannot be carried out without money, or without the employment of officers and surveyors. If the member for Katanning is sincere, and not merely kite-flying, why does he not tell us specifically what items are to be reduced? If he can give me that information, I will gladly support any attempt to make reductions. But I do protest against this pretence of standing out as a strong man and moving motions which get us nowhere. With regard to the land policy of Western Australia, I have come to the conclusion that there is something wrong. The Premier to-night, to my surprise, omitted to give any information concerning what has been done and is being done. In previous years, when the Estimates were introduced, the Minister administering the department, instead of simply letting the Estimates lie on the Table, gave a résumé of his department's doings. He told us just what had been done, and what was the policy for the future. I consider that the Premier has erred greatly in not giving us that lead to-night. We want to know what is being done. We shall be glad to support any policy that is progressive and has some definite end in view. Now, a progressive policy of land settlement in Western Australia depends largely on three elements—wheat growing, sheep raising, and dairying. As regards wheat growing, I am of opinion—I may be wrong—that there are in Western Australia millions of acres which will produce wheat within ten years if put to the test. I have this opinion that within 50 miles to 70 miles of the railway, at Mr. P. A. Connolly's Ningham Station and at Mr. Leslie Parkes's Warriardar Station, hay crops have been grown for years. On Ningham Station, on country which is not too good, one can see some of the finest hay stacks in this country. The same applies at Warriardar. Mr. Parkes has grown wheat of a yield equal to the average yield in any part of this State. The Premier was good enough to promise to come out and see that country. I may say the only failure experienced there was the State-wide failure in 1914. Growth is quicker there, crops mature much more quickly there. The Government, before deciding upon developmental railways, and be-

fore putting people on new country, should establish an experimental farm and prove what can be done. I remember reading with great interest a book on agriculture by Professor Widstoe, which refers to dry farming in Oakland, Montana, and New Mexico, and also Utah. The book shows that, thanks to experimental work, they are able in those countries to grow products on a less rainfall than we have in the wheat belt of Western Australia. In the area I have referred to there is a reliable winter rainfall. The whole area I speak of has a reliable rainfall. It is not so great as the rainfall in the coastal areas, but it is nearly as great. However, the heat being greater in those districts, and the soil being stronger, wheat matures there much more quickly than in localities nearer the coast. Mr. Leslie Parkes last year had a magnificent crop. The country is York gum and salmon gum country, and when I saw it I thought to myself "What a fine place for an experimental farm!" I consider something should be done there just to find out what the country can produce. Then, when we know what can be done, we may ask people to settle there with every prospect of success. That is my view, and I think it is a pretty sound view. At present, before the land has been tested by means of an experimental farm, I would not put a man there except on 20,000 acres, so that he might keep a thousand sheep, which would represent a backing for him. The sheep would maintain him until he could bring his country into production. What struck me regarding that country was this: comparing it with the Western District of New South Wales, one recalls that the rainfall in the Western District of New South Wales falls largely in the summer months. Yass and Cootamundra, for instance, have a 20-inch rainfall; but more than half of it falls during the summer, when no crops are growing. In Western Australia we have a reliable winter rainfall. I do not say it always falls, but on the whole it is reliable; and all our rain falls during the growing season. As regards our wheat areas, we have still a large area available for exploitation; and the Government ought to find out what can be done, and settle the country at the earliest possible moment. Now with regard to what has been said about the South-West. Frankly, I do not like the South-West. I have no particular antipathy to it: it may be much better country than I judge it to be; but I do know this, that while if I wanted to escape drought I would go to the South-West, it would mean many years of laborious toil before I could secure a competency there. From that standpoint I would not like to take on the South-West. On the wheat belt there is a prospect of a competency much earlier, and the work is not so hard. I have come to the conclusion that if the wheat areas are made to produce to their utmost capacity, they will help to develop the South-West of this State, just as the wealth won from the pastoral areas of Western Australia has helped to develop

the south of Western Australia. Very few of the wealthy men of the South-West became wealthy in the South-West. They went to the North-West, became wealthy there, and then they returned to settle in the South-West. I am of opinion that the South-West will be developed by the wheat farmers, and by their sons, in years to come, because they will have the money, which the Government have not to-day, to develop the South-West successfully. At the same time I do not wish to put any obstacle in the way of the Government's policy with regard to the South-West. If, however, I find them wasting money, find them putting the wrong class of man on the land—for instance, immigrants who know nothing of the conditions and quickly become disheartened—I shall not support such a policy. I wish the South-West well, but I do say to my South-Western friends that for the next 10 years more milk and butter will be produced in the wheat districts of Western Australia than in the South-West. In the Victoria and Geraldton districts, where there is a greater abundance of good substantial fodder than in any other part of Western Australia, the farmers are going in for dairying; and from the experience I have gained I am satisfied that we shall be able to carry on dairying successfully there for six or seven months of the year. But that is not sufficient. The successful butter factories in the Eastern States do not carry on for six months of the year and lie idle for the other half. The successful butter factories of New South Wales produce during the whole year. What the Government ought to do in the wheat areas, what is urgently necessary there, is to teach the people to provide fodder during the months when fodder is not growing in its natural state. In the Victoria district, which is represented by the Minister for Agriculture, who now has his opportunity, there is a natural growth of abundant fodder, which can all be conserved. Let the Government build one big silo in that district, and thus show the people what can be done in the way of fodder conservation. Speaking as I have spoken here occasionally, let me say that my youth was spent on the northern rivers of New South Wales, the great North Coast. Though that country was impoverished at the time I refer to, the land there is now worth from £100 to £110 per acre. No young man can get a farm there now: 30 acres is a farm there in these days. The Government of New South Wales conducted very practical experiments in fodder conservation in that district, because the farmers would not touch it otherwise. The Government erected a magnificent silo at Wollongbar, and thereby taught the people the elements of an industry which is now the wealthiest in New South Wales. Hon. members who know the North Coast of New South Wales will appreciate what I say. That district is carrying a larger body of agriculturists than any other part of Australia to-day. When I left there, land could be obtained at £1 per acre; it now brings,

as I have stated, up to £100 and £110 per acre. So I say to this Government that if they are going to spend money on the development of agriculture, they should go to those districts and teach the people the first principles of sound agriculture. As regards the Victoria, Northam, and Geraldton districts the first principle of agriculture, from a dairying standpoint, is the provision of fodder to feed the cattle at a time when nature does not provide for them.

Mr. Money: That applies to all districts.

Mr. TROY: I am a wheat-grower, but I do a little dairying, and I know that my cattle are now going off very much and do not yield the same quantities of milk and butter. I am satisfied that if I could afford to erect a silo, then during the spring I would be able to reap and conserve enough of the magnificent grasses to maintain the cattle in first-class condition all through the year.

Mr. Money: You could conserve the fodder without the help of a silo; you could conserve it in the form of hay.

Mr. TROY: I do not know that, and very few of the farmers in my district know it. However, I have indicated what in my opinion is a practical step for the Government to take. I do hope the Minister for Agriculture will be induced to take this step at the earliest moment.

Mr. Money: What you want is more agricultural education.

Mr. TROY: A great deal has been said about our railways passing through country which is not being used. Public meetings are being held and the Government are being urged to impose a tax to compel those people who hold land in this way to bring it under cultivation. I support that policy because I consider that no man has a right to hold land without putting it to use. I would point out, however, that there is an aspect that should be considered, and it is that settlers cannot bring all their lands under cultivation in the period of one or two years. In some cases it takes 10 or 20 years with good seasons to do this, and that is a point of view which should not be forgotten. Of course where people are not trying to do this, they should be penalised.

Mr. Money: Do you not think they should be assisted?

Mr. TROY: How are we to assist them? By advancing the money from the Agricultural Bank? We know that clearing to-day is very costly and that money is dear. Any man who desires to develop his property is guided by these considerations. In the wheat areas a considerable acreage has been developed and the farmers have done remarkably well. Only on Sunday last I went out some four miles behind my property—I had not been there for a couple of years—and I was amazed to see the amount of work that had been done. This is not the case in many parts of Western Australia. The same enterprise is not exhibited everywhere, and wherever good land is held unused Parliament should take the earliest opportunity of adopting some method

by which the holders of it should be compelled to utilise it in the interests of the State. Another matter which is detrimental to our railways, paying is the fact that we have such large areas of poor country. We hear a good deal about the wonderful lands in Western Australia. But it is quite impossible in poor country to farm successfully. There is a great deal of poor country within a good rainfall belt. Take that part of the State from Dongarra to Geraldton, along the coast, and over a distance of about 300 miles. There is a good climate there and probably one of the best medium rainfalls in Western Australia. The land, however, is so poor that about the only thing the Government could do would be to establish timber plantations on it. A great sandplain stretches from coast to coast in this country and there are millions of acres in regard to which the Government are not exercising a wise policy because they charge too much for the land. They ask 4s. 6d. an acre for it. In my opinion the land is not worth that. I know what I am talking about because adjacent to my property there are 200,000 acres for which I would not pay anything like 4s. 6d. an acre. If, however, the land were leased, say for a period of 20 years, on the condition that the person who leased it improved it, it could be used to advantage. I would risk taking up some of it.

Mr. Mann: Would 20 years be a long enough tenure?

Mr. TROY: After I had passed away the land would not be much good to me. I have a pastoral lease of 2,000 acres which is well supplied with water. I paid a high price for it. I was advised to take it up as a grazing lease, otherwise someone might jump it and I would have to buy it back. I was compelled to take up that land as a grazing lease. Before I took it up water had been discovered on it. The feed on it is coarse and it is only when it is burnt off that a small amount of feed can be got. It would not pay anyone to fence it under existing conditions unless he had some tenure and a cheap rental. I suggest that land of this description should be leased, not sold; then sheep could be put on it and they would improve it. Let it be leased at a peppercorn rental and impose the condition that the person who leases it must fence it. The Que railway runs through about 20 miles of that country and along the whole of that distance there is no settlement. That is where the Government are losing money and by that policy they are not assisting in the development of the State. I have heard a good deal said about the settlement of the Gascoyne and the Kimberleys. The member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) has not said much about the settlement of his particular electorate.

Mr. Teesdale: I do not intend to.

Mr. TROY: I commend the hon. member for his good sense. I make allowance for the other hon. members, who must say

something for their districts. I deprecate the Government going in for settlement of a spasmodic kind, such as growing bananas or peanuts, and so forth, in the North-West, and growing pumpkins in the Kimberleys.

Mr. Johnston: What about sugar cane?

Mr. TROY: I doubt whether we could grow it. I was reared in sugar cane country and I know that a heavy rainfall is required. Along the Richmond River in northern New South Wales there is a rainfall of between 80 and 90 inches and it rains in every month of the year. Kimberley has a dry winter. They might grow maize in Kimberley and maize would be a valuable asset to Western Australia. There is the risk, however, of its being destroyed by the very severe storms which pass through the Kimberleys, so severe, I understand, that it is necessary to tie down the houses. I am opposed to the Government spending any money in settling a few hundred people at Carnarvon. No advantage could follow from this because the Government would have to provide a service to take the products to the market. The result would be somewhat similar to that of New Britain, some 20 or 30 years ago. The people were energetic enough but they were too isolated, and the result was that they had to be taken away from that locality. With regard to pastoral areas, I have stressed the necessity from time to time of resuming pastoral areas along existing railways, rather than allowing one family to exist where there should be 12, as is the case to-day. The Premier's first step should be to extend the boundaries of the south-west district. These boundaries run from a point north of the Murchison river, east to Mullewa, and east of the Wongan Hills line. The time has arrived when the boundaries should be extended, and stations such as Yuin, Gabyon, Cadgy Cadgy, Carara, Tallarang should be included within it. All those properties should be resumed because there the rainfall is sufficiently good to maintain ten times the population existing there to-day. Most of those properties could be utilised for wheat growing. The Cadgy station country is adjacent to the Wongan Hills line. I know that the Premier has been approached from time to time to throw open that land but he has not done so, and I fear that influence has been brought to bear to prevent him doing so.

The Premier: There is no influence.

Mr. TROY: Oh yes, there is. I have made inquiries and I find that this property is held by the Sholls and that some obstacle is placed in the way of the land being taken up by local settlers.

The Premier: It has been taken up.

Mr. TROY: Then it has been taken up quite lately. Whenever the proposal was put forward it was always met by the objection that it could not be done. I do not say that Gabyon station could grow wheat, not because the rainfall is not sufficiently

good, but because there is no depth of soil there. The Mullewa country is an instance of that, the rock is close to the surface and in the dry months the wheat goes off. A few miles further away the wheat matures and yields a high average. There are other stations where wheat could be grown. Of course these are properties where the pastoralists have done their duty to the State, but the time has arrived when the land should be made more productive. If I were starting off to-morrow with 10,000 acres of the Tallarang Station, I would grow oat crops to feed my sheep. With 500 acres of oats I could buy sheep at the Mullewa market, fatten them and make a really good living. In March, April, May and June there is always a shortage of fat stock in the local market, and that is the time I would sell my sheep.

Mr. Clydesdale: At what depth could you get water?

Mr. TROY: At practically any depth.

Mr. Piessé: That does not apply to the whole of the country.

Mr. TROY: Yes, with the exception of a few small areas water can be got anywhere from Mullewa to Nullagine. Settlers will make good more quickly in that country with 10,000 acres than they would on picked blocks in the South-West, where the Premier proposes to spend large sums of money. There is no occasion to spend much money on Murchison country, because already it is carrying sheep, which is the basis on which all settlement ought to be worked. If I had my experience over again I would ringbark the timber, fence it, provide water and put sheep on it, instead of clearing it and growing wheat. I have often marvelled at the want of guidance given to settlers by the officers of the Agricultural Department. All the stations I speak of, from north of the Murchison River right down the Wongan Hills line, carry stock, and I am convinced that 20,000 acres of that country will provide a good living. The Premier, before wasting money elsewhere, ought to try this scheme, which I am sure would be successful.

Mr. Angelo: Where would you be with a three years' drought?

Mr. TROY: I have a friend near Mt. Magnet who has but 23,000 acres. Yet he came through the drought of 1914, and other droughts, and has made a really comfortable living. The hon. member asks how would they get on with a three years' drought! No man need be afraid of the drought when he has on the Murchison a station adjoining the railway, which allows him to unload his stock when he finds a bad season coming on him. This Murchison proposition does not require anything like the money which a man must have to develop the South-West. We bring settlers out from England and ask them to go into the South-West.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The land down there more closely approximates that which they have known in England.

Mr. TROY: But there is the extraordinary cost of clearing. After all, the value of the land is only what it will produce.

Mr. Pickering: Any number of settlers in the South-West have started from scratch and made good.

Mr. TROY: I do not deny that, but in the district I speak of all the settlers and many of the squatters started from scratch, and they have made much more money than has been made in the South-West.

Mr. Pickering: They get quicker returns.

Mr. TROY: When, as at present, the Premier cannot find money to provide capital for the people of the South-West, time is the essence of the contract; and the place where settlers can make good most quickly is the place which should first be developed.

Mr. Money: The best district in Western Australia is the South-West.

Mr. TROY: Yet there is less development in the South-West than in any other portion of the State. Compare what has been done on the wheat belt in 10 years with what has been done in the South-West in 50 years.

Mr. Pickering: And compare the cost of doing it.

Mr. TROY: That is what I say. To-day we have not the money to meet the heavy costs involved in the clearing of South-West land. The policy of the Government ought to be to get the quickest return from the smallest expenditure, and I suggest that can best be done in the wheat areas and the Murchison districts.

Mr. Money: The South-West is the most certain dairying district in Western Australia, and if the development is carried out on right lines it can be done as cheaply as anywhere else.

Mr. TROY: I know that the South-West is the safest of all districts.

Mr. Money: The safest and, I admit, the slowest.

Mr. TROY: The men to pioneer the South-West will have to be men of grit, endurance and courage, and they must have a knowledge of the country. Many of the settlers from the Old Land have been engaged in industrial occupations and are not prepared to take on the laborious work entailed in clearing the South-West.

Mr. Money: With improved methods it need not be so laborious.

Mr. TROY: I hope to see those improved methods instituted; I shall be glad to help all I can. But in the areas I speak of there is a possibility of quicker settlement, and the settlers will help the Government, not only by increasing production, but also by serving to render the railways profitable. I deprecate the policy of putting a few settlers into the Gascoyne district. Years ago there was a great clamour in that district in favour of putting young men on some of the rich pastoral areas. The soundest policy for the development of the Gascoyne district is not to put in a few hundred settlers growing bananas and peanuts, but to give them each 20,000 acres of pastoral land, and a few

thousand sheep. They could make a living on that, and then they could utilise the water of the Gascoyne river to carry on irrigation and thus prove the capacity of their properties. Afterwards, when the whole of the South-Western division is settled, the 20,000 acres in the Gascoyne will give place to 10,000 acre blocks, which in turn will give place to blocks of 5,000 acres. As for the amendment, I do not know whether the member for Katanning desires to see a motion of no-confidence carried. I will vote for the amendment, but not because I would prefer the hon. member to the Premier. I have more confidence in the Premier than in any other member sitting on that side. I will vote for the amendment, not because I am opposed to the Premier, but because I want to see carried out a policy of land settlement under reasonably safe conditions, and I particularly want to see my principles embodied in such a policy.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [9.44]: I do not know whether the member for Katanning made it quite clear that the amendment he moved was or was not to be taken by the Premier as a motion of want of confidence. In any case, it is the hon. member's own amendment, and has no party significance. It is proposed to increase the expenditure under the heading of lands and surveys by £12,700. If that money is to be devoted towards the classification and survey of new land, I feel that the Minister will be justified in asking for more. I endorse the remarks of the member for Mount Magnet when he says there is a fine belt of country to the east of the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway. We have records taken by farmers 16 miles east of Dalwallinu showing that the average rainfall for the last 10 years has been 16 inches. It has gone up as high as 20 inches. The crops each year have been most successful. There has been scarcely a failure in the district. This is typical, I believe, of the large belt of country extending 60 miles from Dalwallinu to the belt of country north of Mt. Marshall. With all due respect to the Premier and his officers, I fear they have very little knowledge of this country. One drawback to the district is the want of an adequate water supply. It should be part of the policy of the Government in their land settlement operations to deal with this question of water supply, and make provision for these pioneers. The member for Mt. Magnet referred to the advantage to be gained by cutting up land into 20,000 acre blocks for settlement. That is a very good proposition, but it does not bring freight to our railways which is so necessary for the country at the present time. There is magnificent country north of Mt. Marshall, probably a million acres suitable for agriculture. I was surprised to find that the land in the region of Mt. Marshall and the Wyalcatech railway was so productive in character. This year there should be an even better average than there has been in the past. The settle-

ment there has proved how highly suitable this country is for the growing of wheat. The only hope we have of increasing production in the State lies in building more railways. We are told that we have sufficient railways already to develop the land now settled. Take the back country between the goldfields line and the Dowerin loop line, Yorkkraine, Newearnie, and North Baandee. There is a large settlement there where wonderful crops are grown, but the distance over which the wheat has to be carted is too great for these people to last out many years. The highest average yield for the last 12 months has recently been obtained from that part of the country. I hope the Government will carry out the promises that were made to assist these people by means of a railway. The allegedly undeveloped lands contiguous to our railways are very limited in area, and are not generally suitable for wheat-growing. Wheat growing is the hope of Western Australia. I feel sure that in time to come this State will grow more than double its present yield of wheat. But we require railway facilities and a better water supply. No step has ever been taken by the Government to overcome the water difficulty. Dams have been put down by the same old methods, but more attention should be paid to this question than has been paid to it in the past. The member for Mt. Magnet spoke of a practical demonstration being made in regard to the use of silos. Such a demonstration is badly needed. If we only had small silos established in different centres, the farmers could be shown how to store their fodder. I feel sure they would then speedily adopt the practice and we would gradually overcome the difficulty facing the settlers of being supplied with fodder for cattle at the latter end of the season. The South-West undoubtedly has bright prospects. What is required is to teach the people how to handle that country. I feel sure it will produce butter the whole year round. People should be encouraged to settle on that land, and should be shown how to make the best use of it. The great drawback there is the high cost of development. It costs ten times as much to develop land there as it does on the wheat belt. This is one of the reasons for the delay in making it productive, and for the difficulty of getting people to take it up. People who travel over our railways frequently say they have seen large areas of undeveloped land. Invariably that particular country is of too light a character to repay anyone for the necessary heavy expenditure required to bring it into a state of development. Those people are, therefore, mistaken in their ideas. People who travel along these lines are often not possessed of the necessary practical knowledge of land settlement, or of the expense of labour connected with the development of those lands, to be able to form an opinion. I am surprised to hear members express an opinion of this nature about which they know so little.

Mr. Money: To what are you referring?

Mr. PIESSE: There is poor land along the South-West, the Great Southern, and the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway lines. It would be good policy for the Government to give the freehold to settlers in many of these cases. Let them have the land to develop it on the conditional holding principle. I am averse to the perpetual lease principle or to the re-appraisal of land values. If the land is developed by the settler, the country receives from that man great advantage by reason of the work he does. The Minister would be justified in increasing the expenditure of his department if it meant further re-classification and survey of vacant lands.

The Premier: Practically nothing else has been spent except on surveys.

Mr. PIESSE: It has been said that we are short of first-class land for settlement. There are tens of thousands of acres of first-class land lying to the north of the Mt. Marshall line and east of the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line, which should be capable of successful development from the farming point of view.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.55]: I do not know whether the member for Katanning intends to press his amendment to a division. He would be well advised to withdraw it. In case, however, it goes to a division, I have no desire to give a silent vote. I do not commend his judgment in launching his economy campaign against these particular departments that are controlled by the Minister for Lands and Repatriation. The departments which the hon. member desires to reduce by 10 per cent. are the Lands and Surveys Departments, the Agricultural Bank, the L.A.B., and the department controlling the land settlement of soldiers. These are the very departments which control the life blood of Western Australia's prosperity. The Government are deserving of congratulation upon the manner in which they have carried their vigorous land settlement policy into effect. I am not sorry to see that the vote this year for the Lands Department is £102,000 as compared with the estimated expenditure last year of £74,000. The Premier is asking 33 per cent. more for the land and Surveys Department this year than he asked for last year. I am pleased that the work of classification, survey and subdivision, and of putting settlers on the land is being so vigorously carried into effect. Had the Government desired a larger amount this year to carry on this great work of land settlement, they would have had my support. There is no more valuable work going on at present, and there are no departments more efficiently managed than these, and no departments are more decentralised. The Lands and Surveys Department has been effectively and efficiently decentralised throughout Western Australia. I would never cast a vote in the direction of cutting down these departments at present. They should not be reduced, particularly in the interests of the country residents and those that are being attacked by this motion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Is not almost all the land around Narrogin taken up?

Mr. JOHNSTON: A good deal of it is taken up. East of the Yillimining-Kondinin railway, we have large tracts of good forest country which have been classified, and which I know the Premier and the Government have a desire to settle. That is a question for the immediate future. It is a question for the railway advisory board and of loan moneys, as to when that country east of the existing settlement and the Great Southern Railway is to be effectively opened up and settled. I am not going to be a party to reducing the vote that we are now discussing, under which I believe we will find out to the full extent what good land we have there, which land I believe the Government would be justified, when railway material becomes cheaper, in opening up. Railways in that country are very necessary in order that it may be settled and so make the country more prosperous. If the hon. member succeeds in getting this vote reduced, Katanning will be deserving of the name of the Kyabram of the West. The activities of the Lands Department are absolutely necessary for the settlement of the people on the land. There is a tradition in the Lands Department to the effect that although the officers have great reverence for the memory of the late Lord Forrest, when he was Premier and Treasurer of the State—he had previously been both Surveyor General and Commissioner for Lands—there were times when he gave a great deal of money to other departments, but starved the Lands Department, and cut down the vote in comparison with his treatment of other departments. I know that is so from my own experience. Officers in the Lands Department have been paid less for many years past than officers with less responsibilities have been paid in other departments. I would, therefore, not feel justified in casting my vote for a reduction in this particular case. In response to the statement made by the member for Coolgardie, I wish to make it clear that the action of the member for Katanning—which he is entitled to take if he thinks right to do so—has not come from the Country Party as a party. I must, however, congratulate the hon. member on the emphasis with which he has pointed to the country that this action is taken as the member for Katanning and not as the deputy Leader of the Country Party. In his desire to disassociate the Country Party from the reduction he proposed, the hon. member has taken up the quixotic and, to my mind, totally unnecessary course of resigning his position as deputy Leader of the Country Party. I regret he has done that, the more because I think, since he has held the position of deputy leader, apart from this particular instance, he has given us as good leadership as we have seen in this Chamber since I have been a Country Party member. As members of the Country Party, however, we should be pleased with the attitude the hon. member

adopted to show that the Country Party were not in association with him in his proposal to move for the reduction of the vote on the Lands Department, the Soldiers Settlement Scheme, the Agricultural Bank, and the Industries Assistance Board. I hope the work of soldier-settlement will not be prejudiced by the carrying of any such amendment, and I hope the hon. member will see fit to withdraw his suggested amendment altogether.

Mr. CORBOY (Yilgarn) [10.2]: I did not intend to speak regarding the Vote for this particular department, but I felt that I should express my views regarding the amendment which the member for Katanning has moved. I will vote against any reduction of the description indicated. I adopt that attitude because there has grown up during recent months a policy in connection with the Country Party, not only in this Parliament, but in every Parliament throughout the Commonwealth, to do a good deal of kite-flying on the question of economy. In practically every State we hear of reductions in the Estimates being moved by members of the Country Party, almost invariably under circumstances in which they know there is no chance of such proposals being adopted. It is merely a ploy to give the people the impression that the Country Party are honestly trying to effect some reduction of the expenditure in connection with Government departments, when, as a matter of fact, they have no such intention whatever. I feel that any reduction such as that suggested would have a very bad effect. Personally, I think Ministers have done their utmost to cut down in every possible way the projected expenditure during the forthcoming 12 months. I believe that the political kite-flying which has been done in connection with this vote has not been in the best interests of the country or of Government departments. I hope the Minister in charge of the Lands Department will give earnest consideration—I believe he is doing so at the present time—to the question of taking action to absorb the men at present being thrown out of employment in the mining industry. It is possible to do a great deal in districts that have been lightly touched so far. Regarding my own electorate, it would be possible to absorb a good many men who have been thrown out of work in connection with the mines, both in the wheat area at the Southern Cross end and at the Ravens-thorpe end as well.

The Minister for Works: What do you suggest they should be put to do?

Mr. CORBOY: To occupations similar to those that are followed in the agricultural districts, that is farming, and in Southern Cross in particular, mixed farming.

The Minister for Works: You suggest we should start them as farmers?

Mr. CORBOY: Yes. I am appealing for this with some justification. It is practically impossible to get that assistance in the two areas I have mentioned, which is possible in

the other parts of the agricultural areas. The contention apparently is that the clouds drift over to the rabbit-proof fence and then turn back. It is contended that the rainfall is not assured. In refutation of that, I may mention that there are about 12 farmers around Southern Cross, excluding those at Bullfinch and other outlying centres. Two of them have been farming for the past 17 years and they have never yet had a failure. If that is not sufficient warrant to regard the district as suitable for mixed farming, it will be difficult to find one. Regarding the Ravens-thorpe end, even more favourable conditions apply there, for the country is exceedingly suitable for farming. It is within 30 miles of the coast and situated along a range of hills which give an assured rainfall. In that respect it is quite suitable for settling in blocks of about a thousand acres. If the Government can see their way clear to grant assistance to these men to engage upon farming pursuits and to follow a more healthy occupation than they have been following in the mines, it will be beneficial both to the men and to the State. An honest endeavour should be made to help people to remain in the districts where they have been residing for many years, and I have every confidence that if assistance be given to these men to take up farming, it will prove successful. Men have started there with very little capital in the past. They have received no assistance worth mentioning from the Government and to-day they are in a sound position. If something were done to extend the operations of the soldier settlement scheme and the Industries Assistance Board, it would have a very beneficial effect.

Mr. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.8]: I would like to remind hon. members that the member for Katanning made no mis-statement when he spoke earlier this evening. He was very clear in pointing out that the action he intended to take was a personal matter and was not to be taken as representing the feeling of the Country Party. We should keep that in mind.

The Minister for Works: We will not forget it.

Mr. SAMPSON: There was no question of misleading the House on the part of the hon. member. I have no hesitation in saying, however, that I have no intention of voting in support of the amendment which I understand is to be moved. I feel that these times call for either an endorsement or otherwise of the policy which the Premier is pursuing in connection with the Vote for Lands and Repatriation. We should be as generous as possible. The future of Western Australia undoubtedly rests upon the prosperity of our wheat lands, our fruit lands, and our dairying industry. That being so, provision of sufficient money in the Estimates is more in the nature of an investment than anything else. I regret it is not possible that an even more vigorous policy can be carried out. Personally, I have

the most confidence in our leader and that confidence is reflected throughout the State.

Mr. McCallum: To whom do you refer as your leader?

Mr. SAMPSON: Our leader is the Premier. In addition to provision for extending our wheat lands, I think consideration should be given to providing land suitable for dried fruits. At the foot of the ranges there are thousands of acres which I think can be profitably used for the growing of sultanas, lemons, and currants. When the Press delegation went through the "Sunraysia" district last year I was a member of that party, and I was amazed to see the wonderful progress that had been made there. Our lands at Maida Vale and generally along the base of the ranges are excellent for the growing of fine fruits, and I hope it will be possible, although it is probably too late this year, to make provision for the closer settlement of those lands. It is a very profitable form of culture and one which in Mildura and other districts along the River Murray has resulted in a great deal of prosperity to those engaged in the industry. I assure the Premier that he has the confidence of members of this House and of the people of the State generally. We are absolutely convinced that his policy is in the best interests of the State, and only by the vigorous carrying out of such a whole-hearted policy can Western Australia advance. It is recognised that the great mining industry is for the moment declining.

Mr. Marshall: Do you suggest the mining industry is defunct?

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not, and I trust we will be generous with the mining industry when we deal with it later on. Western Australia owes a great deal to the mining industry.

Mr. Marshall: My word she does!

Mr. SAMPSON: It is a wise policy, however, especially in view of the state of the mining industry at present, to develop the latent resources that we have within the State. I hope the Premier will continue as he has commenced. He has begun in a way which has the approval of Western Australia and the approval of all those who know the needs of the State.

Mr. Mann: When do you suggest he began?

Mr. SAMPSON: Long before I or the hon. member knew anything about local government.

Mr. Mann: Hear, hear.

Mr. SAMPSON: I assure the Premier that we look to him to continue his policy and to develop it to the utmost. Provision of money to develop the State under the heading of lands and repatriation is in the best interests of the State and there can be no better investment.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.15]: I have always been a strong supporter of the Premier's land settlement policy, and I believe he is doing the right

thing in attempting to develop the South-West. Certainly I am a strong supporter of his group settlement scheme. If we are to bring immigrants from the Old Land, there is no better part of the State in which to place them than the South-West, because the soil there is similar to that to which they have been accustomed in the Old World. It is true the cost of clearing down there is fairly heavy. The estimate is from £13 to £15 per acre.

The Minister for Works: Some of mine cost £30.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But you did not use traction engines, which is the method employed to-day. At Manjimup, the officers estimate that in all probability the clearing for the group settlement will be done at £13 per acre. The soundest policy for this State lies in the filling up of our empty spaces. We have in the South-West thousands of acres, which would carry thousands of persons. Of course a good deal of money is required for the purpose. I think probably the Premier, in view of the abuse levelled at him in the past, will be chary of carrying settlement too far east. In the period 1906-1910 the present Premier did everything he could to develop the wheat areas. In 1911 there was a partial drought, and in consequence the Premier was the most abused man in the country, the charge against him being that he had put settlers too far east.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

Mr. Mann: Those people say their prayers to him now, night and morning.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As the result of that drought, there was a demand for a general reduction in land prices. Only a fortnight ago I attended a meeting called to deal with valuations. Amongst those present was a well known surveyor who has surveyed thousands of acres of land in this State. I asked him, were we not selling our land too cheaply, and he said, "Yes, we are selling it much too cheaply." Some of our best land has been sold at from 10s. to 15s. per acre, land which is worth very much more. I was a member of the Government which was led astray on this point and made the mistake of reducing the price of land.

Mr. Harrison: You considerably increased production thereby.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, I am very doubtful whether we increased production by so much as a bushel. One result of our reducing the price of land was the allowing of persons who should have had only 1,000 acres to take up 2,000 and 3,000 acres and hold a large portion of it out of cultivation. At all events, Parliament agreed to it, and the price of land was considerably reduced. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) has been impressing on the Premier the necessity for taking settlers out further east. Yet the hon. member was one of the strongest in condemnation of the Premier in 1911 on the score that he had taken the wheat grow-

ers too far east; he styled the Premier "The breezy optimist from Northam."

Mr. Johnston: Railways have been built since then.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, but railways do not prevent droughts. Railways have taken out to some dry districts at £1 per thousand gallons water which cost the Government £4 per thousand. In the South West we have thousands of acres entirely free from any risk of drought, country where, not water, but drainage is required. It is far better to pursue development in areas having a sure rainfall than to open up areas in districts where there is a possibility of drought. I hope the Premier will be careful if he resolves upon pushing settlement out east. I am very much surprised at the amendment moved by the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson). Hon. members should weigh very carefully the remarks made by the hon. member when moving his amendment. He represents a large agricultural district, one of the best in the State, but there is in that district a big area still requiring settlement. If the Vote be reduced by 10 per cent., it will mean the immediate cessation of land settlement throughout the State.

Mr. Marshall: That will suit some of the bigger holders of Katanning.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of the vote on the Estimates no less a sum than £61,000 has been fixed by boards appointed by Parliament to adjust the rate of salaries. Parliament is responsible for that amount, and so it cannot be altered, even though we might dismiss a few officers. What items would the hon. member have cut down? There is an increase of £9,161 for clearing; there is £1,778 wages for survey hands; and there is £1,884 for refunds to revenue; making a total of £12,723. I cannot approve of cutting down surveys. We are asking people to go on the land. There were at Fremantle 80 applications for land the other day. I want to see those men settled. If we reduce the Vote those men will go, not on the land but on the unemployed list, and the Premier will be left with a staff of officers but with no money for the purpose of putting that staff to work. With all due respect to the member for Katanning, I say that if his electors desire the cessation of land settlement throughout the State, desire to see the empty spaces left unoccupied, then the hon. member could not have adopted a better attitude than he has adopted to-night. I hope the Committee will not agree to any reduction of the Vote, but will back up the Premier, or anybody else, prepared to go ahead with land settlement. We want to see people going on the land in their thousands; and the only way to encourage land settlement is by furnishing the necessary money. At Manjimup I asked the Premier why he could not bring more men down there while they were anxious to come, and his reply was, "I cannot get the surveys carried out fast enough." If we agree to the

amendment moved by the member for Katanning, how can we go ahead with surveys? Those who vote in support of the amendment will be voting against increased land settlement, and so against increased population; because at present the only way in which to materially increase our population is by increasing land settlement.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.28]: I am extremely sorry the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) in his endeavour to assist in the reduction of the deficit should have moved a reduction in this particular Vote. For some time past the hon. member has been most anxious for an adjustment of the State's finances. I have seen many increases in capital cost which have been entirely beyond the Premier's power to remedy. They have been brought about by combinations. It is, we know, beyond the Premier's power to reduce capital cost to the degree we should like to see it reduced. It is most unfortunate for the member for Katanning that he should have moved his amendment on this particular Vote, but it was the first Vote to come on this afternoon.

Mr. A. Thomson: You would not suggest that it was done on purpose?

Mr. HARRISON: I am not suggesting it. I only rose to assure the Committee that I am convinced of the hon. member's earnestness in moving his amendment in order to focus the attention of the Committee on the various items with a view to their being carefully scrutinised. I want these words recorded, because I feel that the member for Katanning has done his best in the interests of the State, his electorate and mine during the period I have been unable to attend to the duties.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [10.30]: The discussion on this vote reminds me of the old saying, "Distant fields appear the greenest." I am convinced that the policy in this State for some years past has been too far reaching, for we have within a few miles of the city of Perth some of the richest land in Australia lying idle, not because of the cost of clearing, but because the Almighty has given a little more water than was necessary, and we have been too lazy to construct the necessary drainage that this land might be utilised to its utmost. At the same time, we have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds in the construction of railways to distant parts. Our metropolitan market for years should have been supplied by the lands within 50 miles of Perth. We have land there equal to the best swamps in Victoria, which for many years were equally badly treated. These swamps, however, have more than repaid the total cost of drainage works. With all the world's experience in front of us, we have been blind for years past. In the Old Country the fens and the marshes, lands very similar, have been made the most productive and valuable in the world. Very little of that land to-day is worth less than £100 an acre. In the course of a few years, with

practical drainage schemes, the swamps from Fremantle right round the coast to Albany could be made equally valuable from a productive point of view to supply our markets. Is it reasonable, is it sensible, is it economical to pay £7 or £8 per head for freighting cattle from the North-West to supply the people of Perth? It is not fresh meat; it is not frozen meat; I do not know what to call it. Although it is very fat meat, a lot of it is very much bruised. It is not economical to do this, and I have been wondering whether Western Australia has been too much under the thumbs of people interested in the North-West. They have had the advantage of our markets for years when people close at hand should have been developing the country very much nearer to the metropolis. Our fields down south remain green for a far greater portion of the 12 months than those in the North. The cattle there fatten quickly, the seasons are uncertain. Here there is an assured rainfall. There is no other part of Australia, and I doubt whether there is any other part of the world with the certain rainfall we have in the South-West. I have been here for 28 years and I have not experienced the semblance of a drought. With such assured conditions and such certain growth, it is simply marvellous what can be produced. Though a lot of that land is not of the best, with the natural period of growth commencing in March and ending in November, all of it will grow good pasture, provided farming knowledge is brought to bear on the task. With proper treatment all kinds of clovers grow knee high. Look along the railways, and there on land which has never been cultivated the clovers grow knee high. Farming in the South-West is not a matter of speculation; it presents the greatest certainty of any spot in Australia. If we are not taking advantage of it, it is due to the fault of our people and to the lack of knowledge. I admit that the work is not easy; it requires knowledge to farm this land. A lot of elementary knowledge is required. For years half the crops in that locality have been wasted, because we have not practised the elements of agriculture by recognising the necessity for drainage. To-day the same costs for manure, for seed, for ploughing, drilling and gathering are incurred as are necessary for a full crop. Probably the cost of the seeding would have been sufficient to carry out the necessary drainage and give a bountiful harvest. I agree entirely with the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) in stressing the necessity for wider agricultural education. The present position is deplorable but it is not surprising. I should think that in no country in the world are people dumped on the land without previous training as they are in Western Australia. It would be well if the Government expended £10,000 or £20,000 a year to obtain thorough agricultural instructors to assist the people on the land. If we could only increase production by 10 per cent. as a result of a system of

thorough instruction, it would be money well spent. I have no hesitation in saying that by thorough instruction an increase of 30 to 40 per cent. in production could be obtained. Everybody knows the necessity for drainage in the South-West. The older members know that for years we have been asking that greater attention be devoted to drainage. There is also need for applying lime in which the soil is deficient. It is not that lime has any value as a manure, but it acts on the land in such a way that, after the application, the full benefit of the manure is obtained, and only one-third of the quantity is required. I agree with other members that if there is one vote which we cannot afford to touch, it is this. We cannot afford to be niggardly. We must spend the money, because we cannot afford not to spend it. This is not the only example of expenditure which we cannot afford to forego. I would be prepared to spend £30,000 at once on an agricultural college, even if we went bankrupt by so doing. There are so many matters connected with the development of the State that we cannot afford to drop. I am reminded of a speculator who became indebted to the bank to such an extent that the bank told him they could not carry him any further. He replied, "If you stop me now I will wreck the bank. You will have to go further so that I can see you through." I do not suggest that Western Australia is in that state, but we cannot afford to stop in some directions, though we must economise in all unproductive departments. This is a department on which the existence of Western Australia depends, seeing that it is responsible for the settlement of new lands, and the filling up of our empty spaces.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.40]: The House knows that if the motion of the member for Kataning is carried it will be taken as a motion of no confidence in the Government. I do not know that he is serious in suggesting that no attempt has been made at economy. He said he had consulted a previous Treasurer who was in office a couple of years ago, and that he had been told by that gentleman that the Estimates could be reduced by 10 per cent. I do not know how it could be done. I am sure that Mr. Gardiner did his best to make ends meet. Since then there has been the tremendous added expense because of the genuine development that has taken place.

Mr. A. Thomson: You know the reason why he resigned.

The PREMIER: Why?

Mr. A. Thomson: Because he could not get his colleagues to agree with him.

The PREMIER: Nonsense! Do hon. members realise the difference between those days and these days! I do not believe the member for Kataning fails to understand the difference. In those days there was nothing doing in Western Australia. There was no land settlement going on. Soldiers were not being settled. There was unemployment and

trouble everywhere. Industries were more or less at a standstill. It is true that gold, lead, tin, and copper were being worked, but apart from that everything else was quiet. There was no land being cleared for settlement and no development going on. Since then everything has gone up in cost. Members should ask themselves where any reduction in a vote such as this can be made. It is not enough to say that there has been no economy. It is so cheap and so easy to say that. There has been economy and I have shown where it has occurred. There is less expenditure this year on these votes than there was last year, notwithstanding that we have had to meet the increases in salaries awarded by the Appeal Board. I venture to say that the hon. member has not yet looked through the items on these Estimates.

Mr. A. Thomson: I have.

Mr. Mann: He is making it general.

The PREMIER: If so, there is no excuse for him. He is deliberate in his attempt to cut down this vote which is so vital to the people. Included in the vote is an item of £20,000 which is to be used for clearing by tractors and for cutting firewood. Against that there will be a return of £8,000. The wood itself is sold. If the hon. member wishes the House to believe that there has been no definite economy he has gone the wrong way about it. We are doing all we can to carry on the development of this country and to see that work is found for everyone. It has been the most difficult task possible, the most difficult that has faced any Government for the last two or three years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I am glad you confine it to the last two years.

The PREMIER: The trouble lies with our public utilities. I believe the hon. member intends to test the feeling of the Committee on this matter. I hope that when the division is taken he will be satisfied that he has done what he set out to do, and that he has expressed his objection to the expenditure on land and repatriation. I also hope he will then look into the Estimates and ask himself if it is not a fact that he has failed to realise the position. It is not right that Ministers should be criticised where criticism is not deserved. If there is one direction in which money is being well spent, it is in the direction of developing the country. This money is being economically spent. If the hon. member will compare the work that is being done with the work that was done a year or two ago, he will see that the position is quite clear. Twice as much work is being done by the Lands Department to-day than was done two years ago. I do not know what more could be done. I appreciate the remarks of hon. members who have spoken so wholeheartedly about land settlement. I am glad, too, that the work has met with the approval of the member for North-East Fremantle and others. I want to go on with it and assist these people to produce, and to help themselves as well as the country. Surely it is a great work and should meet with the

approval of members of the Country Party, as it evidently has met with the approval of other members. I hope this vote will not be reduced. Hon. members are now aware that the amendment will represent a motion of want of confidence in the Government. I ought to have said this at an early stage. However, I did not realise it. Had I done so, I would have taken the opportunity of replying to the member for Katanning upon the conclusion of the speech in which he intimated his intention of moving the reduction.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I shall now move my amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: At the end of the discussion on the items I shall give the member for Katanning an opportunity to move his amendment. I must first allow the Committee an opportunity to discuss items.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I desire to say, though not by way of protest, Sir—

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow any discussion of the matter.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I want to be permitted to say that I shall move a reduction of 10 per cent., not in opposition to the policy of settling and developing the lands of this country, but as a direction to the Government to economise.

Item, District surveyors, Narrogin, £636:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I thought that most of the lands around Narrogin had been taken up, that there was no land available in the district unless one went out into the dry areas. Nevertheless, it appears that the Narrogin district lands and survey office is going to cost over £2,000 this year.

The PREMIER: The Narrogin office is one of the busiest we have. A great deal of land to the westward of Narrogin has been taken up this last year.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Supplementing the Premier's remarks, I should like to say, replying to the sneers of the member for North-East Fremantle, that from the Narrogin office are controlled the whole of the lands now vacant along the Great Southern railway, as are also the lands towards the east. I am sure the member for North-East Fremantle will be pleased to know that in the eastern districts numerous blocks which, having been partly improved, were abandoned in or after the year 1914, have lately been selected. There is also a large demand for surveyed land at Kalgar, where railway communication will have to be supplied later.

Item, Refunds of revenue, £2,300:

Mr. ANGELO: What does this item represent?

The PREMIER: Amounts which have been overpaid; for instance, refunds of rents overpaid.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I now move my amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £10,000.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £436—agreed to.

[This concluded the Estimates of the Departments of Lands and Repatriation.]

Colonial Treasurer's Department—Hon. Sir James Mitchell, Minister.

Vote—Treasury, £14,422:

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [9.55]: I greatly regret that the Premier has adopted the attitude that any motion for the reduction of a vote must be accepted as a motion of want of confidence in the Government. The result is that members who endeavour to carry out their election pledges are placed in an utterly false position. As regards voting on items, my experience has been that although items are cut out, the money nevertheless is spent. I would like the Committee to give the Government a general direction as to the quarters in which economies should be effected. Although fighting a forlorn hope, I still ask the Committee to give such a direction. On the Lands Estimates I found myself in an unfortunate position. I admit the strength of the arguments adduced by various members. As regards this Treasury Vote, I recognise that the bulk of the increases which it shows have been forced upon the Treasurer. If I moved the excision or reduction of any particular item, I would at once be told that it was a matter of salary, and therefore a matter outside the control of Parliament—Parliament having appointed a board to fix the salaries of public servants. My idea in suggesting the reduction of the Estimates generally on a 10 per cent. basis was to give Ministers an intimation that members as a whole would stand behind them in the matter of economies. However, the Government take the position of saying, "There are our Estimates; pass them. If you do not accept what we give you we will get out." What is the use of endeavouring to reduce salaries already fixed by the Appeal Board?

The Premier: That is what you tell us to do by moving to reduce a vote by 10 per cent.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No. The carrying of such an amendment would be merely a general direction to Ministers to effect economies. No doubt they are endeavouring to effect them. In this connection let me remark that the Minister controlling a certain department plotted out how certain work should be done, but unfortunately was compelled to go away into the country, and on his return found that his instructions had been disobeyed, with the result that, to quote his own statement, it was difficult to ascertain what the work would cost the State. Again, for certain works in the North-West a Minister required a certain article, and inquiry was made whether the article was in stock at the Government Stores. The reply was in the negative, and

the article had to be imported from the Eastern States at a cost of £600. When the Minister went to his own department later on, the first thing brought under his notice was the very article which would have filled the bill, and would have saved £600 to the State. I mention this fact to show what position Ministers are confronted with and also what faces members of this Chamber. The treatment of the Estimates is a farce. They are presented to the House and we are told that we cannot reduce them in any way we desire, because if we do so the Government will regard the action taken as a vote of no confidence. We cannot transfer an amount from one item to another because the Standing Orders prevent us from doing so. No private member has the power to increase a single item, neither are we permitted to reduce an item.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We can reduce them or wipe them out altogether.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If we wipe them out, the Premier says he will regard the act as a vote of no confidence.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is a different matter; the provision is there.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I want the country to realise that this is the position. We hear people asking what members of Parliament are doing and yet when we make an honest endeavour to effect economies, we are debarred from doing so. If this is the position, it is absolutely useless for us to discuss the Estimates. I regret that the Premier has seen fit to adopt the attitude I have indicated, and in these circumstances I feel bound to move an amendment—

That the Vote be reduced by £1,400.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That will mean that we will not deal with the Vote at all.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I would like to explain to the Committee that when I moved for a reduction of 10 per cent. on the Vote—"Lands Department and Repatriation," I intended it to apply to the whole Vote, whereas the debate apparently dealt with the Lands Department only. I intended the amendment to apply to the whole division.

The Premier: Some of the Votes referred to repatriation.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I simply wish to make clear that my amendment was intended to apply to the Vote en bloc.

The CHAIRMAN: The Standing Orders do not permit you to do that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I submit to your ruling, but I want my explanation on record in "Hansard."

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Audit, £11,947:

Mr. A. THOMSON: I intend to move that this vote be reduced by 10 per cent. as well. My reason for so doing is that in the Auditor

General's reports for the years ended 30th June, 1919, and 1920 respectively, the following paragraph appears:—

Without dissection of the whole of the entries for the year against the appropriation "Advance to Treasurer," it is not possible to say how much of the £400,000 provided by Parliament was used. The returns do not give the information, and the bookkeeping system does not provide for marshalling all charges in a convenient manner against the appropriation.

I move my amendment as a protest against the action of the Auditor General who, although he has included that statement in his two reports, has not attempted to make any alteration.

Mr. Marshall: He has not stated that there is any extravagance involved.

Mr. A. THOMSON: As Auditor General, he should have seen that his proposal was carried into effect. I move an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £1,200.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Compassionate allowances, £1,219:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: Last session a petition, signed by practically every member of Parliament, was presented to the Premier asking that a compassionate allowance should be provided for Mrs. Daglish, the widow of a late Premier. Has anything been done in connection with that matter?

The PREMIER: Nothing has been done. I will look up the position and see whether anything can be done.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government Savings Bank, £32,193:

Item, Manager, £552:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: The manager of the Government Savings Bank has received an increase of £2.

The PREMIER: No, it is £48.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: This means that the manager of a big institution, handling about six millions per annum, gets the paltry salary of about £11 a week, whereas the heads of ordinary associated banks receive from £1,500 to £2,000 a year, although they do not handle half as much money.

Mr. Angelo: That is nonsense.

Mr. Teesdale: You had better move to increase his salary.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: Unfortunately, I cannot do that under the Standing Orders.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The appeal board is dealing with this matter.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: The Committee should have something to say about it as well. The salary paid to the manager of the Government Savings Bank amounts to a scandal, and I hope the Premier will see that the salary paid is more commensurate with the importance of this position.

Mr. MANN: What is the position in regard to Mr. Leschen? Has he been retrenched from the service?

The PREMIER: He has been retired.

Mr. LUTEY: I understand that negotiations have been proceeding between the Commonwealth and the State regarding the proposed transfer of the State Savings Bank. What has been the outcome of those negotiations?

The PREMIER: Negotiations are proceeding now. I shall be seeing Sir Denison Miller when I get to Melbourne. Only the other day I told the House I would make known the exact position before finality was reached.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I should like to remind the Premier that the State Savings Bank has been of considerable benefit to the friendly societies. In Queensland the friendly societies lost that benefit when the State bank was transferred to the Commonwealth.

The PREMIER: I promise the hon. member that nothing of the sort will happen if and when our State bank is transferred to the Commonwealth.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government Stores, £19,271:

Mr. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That Contingencies, £11,507, be reduced by £1,150.

I am dealing with an item now.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Nonsense, you are dealing with a subdivision.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Anyhow, I move that it be reduced.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment cannot be accepted.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Very well, I will withdraw it. I now move an amendment—

That the Vote be reduced by £1,150.

Mr. Teesdale: Anything at all, so long as it is something.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Taxation, £12,276:

Mr. A. THOMSON: How much money has been saved by the amalgamation of the State and Federal Departments?

The PREMIER: The Estimates show £21,596.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Is that an actual saving? Has any actual saving been effected up to date?

The PREMIER: Yes, there is an actual saving every day in the year. If the hon. member will divide 365 into the sum I have named, and calculate the time that has elapsed since the amalgamation, he will arrive at the actual saving to date.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The report of the Commissioner of Taxation did not say that any saving had been effected. It stated that possibly a saving might result, but that thus far the only advantage gained by the amalgamation was the making available to the State Department of information held by the Federal Department.

The Premier: That was up to the 30th June last.

Vote—put and passed.

Vote—Workers' Homes Board, £4,335:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I again draw attention to the exceedingly small salary paid to the head of this department. I notice that the department is to take over the control of the war service homes, which will mean a considerable increase in work. I hope the Premier will see that the salary of this officer is correspondingly raised.

The Premier: He is certainly a very capable officer.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: He is worth a much larger salary.

Mr. MANN: What is to be the policy in regard to the Workers' Homes Board in the ensuing year? In view of the high rents charged in the metropolitan area, I should like to know if the Government intend to enlarge the scope of the Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. MONEY: I should like to know whether it is intended to extend the operations of the board to the country.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: For the last three years they have been operating exclusively in the country.

Mr. MONEY: If that is so, it is difficult to find the homes built in the country.

Mr. Latham: A number of them are to be seen in country districts.

Mr. MONEY: It is not so in my district.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know you have made a mistake; why not admit it?

Mr. MONEY: We are increasing facilities in the cities. I think it is time we paid some attention to the producing areas. If we wish to attract population to the country districts we must provide necessary housing accommodation. People are coming to the city because it is the only place where they can get shelter. It would be better for both the city and the country if more attention were paid to housing in the country districts.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I echo the remarks of the member for North Perth with respect to this officer, who is a competent man, but not on the ground that this department brings profit to the Government. The object was not to make a profit, but merely to pay expenses. There is no doubt that the member for Bunnbury (Mr. Money) made a mistake. He doubtless heard that no money was being voted for the country and thought he had got something on to the Premier, but he made the greatest blunder of his life, because for two or three years no money has been granted in the metropolitan area.

Mr. A. Thomson: Because it is possible to build more cheaply in the country than in the city.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, it was because the Premier and a great number of his supporters represent the country, and he intimated that only the country districts would be dealt with. I am pleased that at present he is providing funds for town and country.

I issue a warning to the Premier that the metropolitan members can, if they so desire, bring to bear greater pressure than the country members, though we have not done it as yet.

Mr. Latham: You cannot make the combination.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member has not attended the meetings of metropolitan members. We are determined to see that justice is done to the metropolitan area. There are other things besides party politics. We want to ensure that the metropolitan area is treated the same as the country. I have been in this House for 16 years, and I have never known metropolitan members to take action to divert money from the country to the metropolitan area. We have treated the State as a State, but we intend to see that we get fair play in future.

Mrs. COWAN: I hope the Premier will realise that the metropolitan area needs quite as much attention in this respect as the country.

The Premier: It is getting as much attention.

Mrs. COWAN: Not long ago investigations showed that there were four-roomed houses in which 25 people were living. It is time we returned to the old system of establishing workers' homes so that people can get homes. I am as anxious as anyone to see people settling in the country, but there are large numbers who cannot be accommodated. Metropolitan members intend to stand up for their constituents in this matter.

Mr. ANGELO: I think the reason the Commonwealth Government are handing over their war service homes to be dealt with by the Workers' Homes Board is that their scheme has not been running satisfactorily, while they recognise that the State scheme is well managed. I trust that when the amalgamation takes place, the Premier will see that a great deal of credit is due to the manager of the Workers' Homes Board. He is a very capable officer, and I was glad to hear the members for North Perth and North-East Fremantle putting in a good word for him.

The Minister for Works: He is a very fortunate officer in having advocates here when he has an appeal board to go to.

Mr. ANGELO: The Premier and others are lamenting that such a great proportion of the population is located in the towns, and that more people are not living in the country. For years the people in the North-West have been trying to get workers' homes, but so far have not succeeded in getting one.

The Minister for Works: No workers up there.

Mr. Mann: The workers up there are only casual and pass to and fro.

Mr. ANGELO: The remark of the member for Perth is correct, because the workers cannot get homes to live in.

Mr. Marshall: White or black workers?

Mr. ANGELO: There must be a lot of black people in the hon. member's constitu-

ency as he is always talking about them. A requisition signed by 22 genuine workers was forwarded to the Government last year, asking that workers' homes be erected for them in Carnarvon. Many of these men had permanent positions, but they had to leave the town because they could not get house accommodation.

The Premier: We treat their applications the same as anyone else's.

Mr. ANGELO: The people in the metropolitan area can go to the office and obtain all information at five minutes' notice. The people at Carnarvon have not a copy of the Act and cannot get the pamphlets, so that they do not know the conditions under which these homes are provided.

Mr. Mullany: But they have a member.

Mr. ANGELO: I suggest that the manager of the board should be permitted to go to Carnarvon and explain the scheme. The people there would be willing to pay the expenses of the trip. The Premier has agreed that this should be done and that an officer shall go up there. We in the North who pay our taxes should be entitled to the benefits of this scheme. Metropolitan members are calling out for more homes in their localities, but already we have too many people living there.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: We are paying for them.

Mr. ANGELO: People should not be encouraged to come to the city. They are nothing but parasites on the producing community. Our applications were made 18 months ago and should have been considered long ago.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Has the Premier taken into consideration the question of people converting their leasehold homes into freehold? Petitions have already been presented to the Government on the subject. Those who are desirous of obtaining the freehold of their properties should have the privilege of doing so. It is not asking too much to request the Government to amend the Workers' Homes Act in this direction.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion. If people are desirous of retaining their homes under the leasehold principle they can do so, but if they desire to convert them into freehold they have every right to do so. In some cases people might have been compelled through financial stress to get their homes under the leasehold principle.

The Premier: I will give the matter consideration.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am sorry the Premier made that interjection to satisfy the hon. member. These cases do not need any consideration. The Workers' Homes Act contains one part for freehold, and another part for leasehold homes.

The Premier: Parliament would have to agree to the conversion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Under the freehold principle all that people have to do is to pay for the land and the Government build their homes for them. People who wanted homes had the opportunity of taking them up under either one part or the other.

Mr. A. Thomson: In some cases they had not enough money to buy their own land.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Why should they try to block anyone else from doing so? It is merely a few selfish people who have obtained leasehold homes at a lower rate, who want to block others from getting freehold homes. Under the leasehold principle people have been able to save one-half per cent. interest. I am going to vote against the conversion from leasehold to freehold. It is a proposition which should not be entertained by members. By means of a little thrift people could have saved enough money with which to buy their own land and thus have obtained freehold homes. They did not want to do so and now they want to block others from doing it.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is not correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As member for North-East Fremantle I have had no requests for a change from leasehold to freehold.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Perhaps they know your opinions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Probably they knew I held such strong views against it that they did not come to me. The workers' home leasehold system is working satisfactorily. Many people took up homes under that part of the Act, even though they had enough money with which to buy land. I advised some of them to do so in order that they might have a little money in the bank in case of sickness. I trust the Government will not amend the Act in order to wipe out the leasehold system.

Mr. McCALLUM: Have the Government taken into consideration a cheaper means of building workers' homes?

The Premier: They have.

Mr. McCALLUM: Although country members complain that workers' homes are not being provided in their localities it is as well for them to know that no workers' homes have been built in the city for three years.

The Premier: You are wrong there.

Mr. McCALLUM: I have been trying for three years to get advances for workers' homes within the metropolitan area, but have been informed that no money is available for that purpose.

The Premier: It was stopped two years ago.

Mr. McCALLUM: It is considerably over three years since the department shut down on expenditure of this sort in the metropolitan area, although possibly one or two houses may have been erected since then. The cost of erecting a house of four or five rooms runs into £700 or £800 at existing prices; and to pay 7 per cent. per annum interest on that cost, in addition to rates and

taxes, is an impossibility for the average worker. Has the Premier had inquiry made into Edison's invention for constructing concrete houses? I believe that invention has since been improved upon in America. Inquiries into methods of improving and cheapening the cost of house construction should be made all over the world. In this connection, I repeat the suggestion I made on the Address-in-reply, that industry boards should be established, so that the best brains may be got together for the purpose of devising the most satisfactory means of conducting each industry.

Mr. Latham: Edison's method of house construction has not proved a success.

Mr. A. Thomson: Houses on Edison's plan are dearer now.

Mr. Latham: They have never proved a success in England.

Mr. McCALLUM: My view is that all the trades concerned in house construction should join to consider the problem of housing the people, which is a very pressing one. Have the Government set any inquiries on foot?

The PREMIER: We have not yet made inquiries, but they will be made, and everything that can be done will be done to furnish the workers with cheaper and more comfortable homes.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £97,339:

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

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I wish to say a word on behalf of this very deserving society. The fines inflicted do not cover the cost of prosecutions; and the Government are, in fact, benefiting to the extent of hundreds of pounds annually by the work of the society. Therefore, I hope the Premier will see his way to make the society a somewhat larger grant.

The PREMIER: I recognise that the society does good work.

Item, Fire Brigade Board, Contribution, £9,685:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £1,000.

In 1919-20 the contribution was £6,400; last financial year it was £6,900; this financial year it rises to £9,685. The contribution represents only one-fourth of the expenditure, the other three-fourths being paid by local authorities and insurance companies. Moreover, the burden is becoming a fairly heavy one on the ratepayers. The Fire Brigade Board must be given to understand that some of their show has to be cut away.

The Premier: I agree with that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There has been continually increasing expenditure from the very start. The position as regards cost of material and wages is no more unfavourable this year than it was last year, and yet the item shows an increase of £998. The board

should at least keep within their expenditure of last year.

The PREMIER: I quite agree that the amount of this item should not be so large as it is. Further, I do not think the Government should ever have entered into the arrangement which obtains. I consider that notice should be given of the Government's intention to terminate the arrangement. The contribution should be limited to £6,000 or £7,000, no matter what the total expense might be. Under the existing arrangement, the State's contribution automatically increases as the board's expenditure rises.

Amendment put and passed.

Item, Parks, Recreation Grounds, etc.—grants for maintenance and improvements—King's Park Board, £2,400; other grounds, £400; total £2,800:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: King's Park gets an increase of £500, while all the other parks in the State together receive only £400.

Mr. Mann: King's Park is the national park.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is no more national than any other park in the State. Perth has the Supreme Court gardens maintained by the Government, and the gardens on the Esplanade maintained by the Government—

Mr. MacCallum Smith: And Government House gardens.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN:—and Crawley is also kept up by the Government. On top of that we have a grant of £2,400 for King's Park. Take, for comparison, a place like Point Walter. Nearly as many people visit Point Walter as visit King's Park.

Mr. Mann: People go to the King's Park all day and every day.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: So they do at Point Walter, yet the only money spent apart from the grant of £2,400 to King's Park, is £400, which means that only £400 is spent on all the other parks throughout the State. Any increase should be given to the outside grounds.

Mr. Mann: You would not compare Point Walter with King's Park?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: King's Park is not half so attractive as Point Walter.

Mr. Mann: You are not serious.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I mean it. If the people want to go for a picnic, they go to Point Walter and not to King's Park. The Vote should be distributed more fairly.

The Minister for Works: You can get an income from Point Walter that you cannot get at King's Park.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is not so; there are the tennis courts and so on at King's Park. I am surprised that the Premier has placed this matter before the Committee in its present form, more especially as there is an additional item of £171 for the Park later on.

Mr. Mann: The President of the King's Park Board (Mr. Lovekin) spends £1,000 a year in connection with King's Park.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: All the more credit to him. There are other people in Perth who have got a great deal more out of the people of the metropolitan area than he has.

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £1,000.

I think the Vote should have been distributed more generally.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The amendment will not have that effect. It will mean simply knocking it about.

The PREMIER: King's Park is practically the one park in Perth that is kept by the Government.

Mr. Mann: It is the National park.

The PREMIER: There are a number of roads through the park and they are really highways.

Mr. Latham: Let the Perth City Council take charge of them.

The PREMIER: So long as the park is controlled by the Government, it must be kept in order, for it is one of our show places.

Mr. Teesdale: It is a scorching place for motor cars.

The PREMIER: We must keep the park in good order or else close it up.

Mr. Latham: There will be £1,400 left.

The PREMIER: That would not go within coo-ee of doing all that is necessary in the park. I think the Perth City Council should take over and control those things that properly belong to Perth, including the parks.

Mr. ANGELO: How much of the £400 is spent outside the metropolitan area?

Mr. Latham: Absolutely nothing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We get £100 for Point Walter.

Mr. ANGELO: At Carnarvon the people maintain their own park with a small contribution in addition which is furnished by the local governing authorities. Life should be made more congenial in the outlying centres.

Mr. Mann: Do you not desire to advertise the show places of the State? People coming through in the mail boat only have a few hours and the King's Park is a show place.

Mr. ANGELO: The local people should be patriotic enough to support the park.

Mr. Clydesdale: Does that not apply to your own district?

Mr. ANGELO: It does, and we are maintaining our own park.

Mr. Mann: Do you know of any capital city which has not its show park?

Mr. Latham: We are not objecting to a national park.

Amendment—put and negatived.

[12 o'clock midnight.]

Item, Departmental advertising (except Railways and State Steamship Service), £2,500:

Mr. A. THOMSON: What is this to be spent on?

The Premier: Advertising.

Item, Government Stores depreciation adjustment, £1,000:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: What is this item?

The PREMIER: It is to cover depreciation in the Government Stores. It has been a customary item for years. I wish they would cut it out.

Item, Incidental, £750:

Mr. TEESDALE: I am very suspicious about such items. I should like some explanation of this.

The PREMIER: This covers expenditure which cannot be charged up in any of the departments, expenditure such as inspection of hotels by the police, the cost of attending the Premier's Conference, and that sort of thing.

Item, Subsidy, south-east coast mail service (State Steamship Service), £1,150:

Mr. ANGELO: For how long are the Government going to pay a subsidy which the Commonwealth Government should be providing? This is to assist the "Eucla" to make a big loss. She has been losing £6,000 per annum. Out of every 28 days she is tied up at Albany for 18 days.

The CHAIRMAN: This discussion will more properly come under the Estimates of the State Steamship Service.

Item, Bonus on wheat, £250:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I should like some explanation of this.

The PREMIER: It is for a bonus on wheat grown at Esperance, to cover the cost of carting.

Mr. Angelo: Is that not against the Commonwealth law?

The PREMIER: We will risk that.

Item, Bonus for suggestions for effecting economy in Public Service, £100:

Mr. LUTEY: This seems small. Does it take in the whole of the Public Service, including the Railways?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. LUTEY: It certainly seems very small.

The PREMIER: It is in accordance with the recommendation of the special committee appointed to deal with the suggestions. The money has been well spent, and has resulted in the effecting of some economies. It is used merely for providing small rewards.

Vote as reduced to £155,474, put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 127 a.m.