

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE moved an amendment—

That the House adjourn till Tuesday next.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Municipal Corporations Bill had to be dealt with, and it was a big one. If it would meet the wish of members, he would alter the motion to read that the House at its rising do adjourn till 4:30 on Tuesday next.

Amendment withdrawn; the motion as altered put and passed.

The House adjourned accordingly at eight minutes to 6 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

## Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 30th October, 1906.

	PAGE
Election Voided, Geraldton ... ..	2564
Question: Railway Holiday Fares ... ..	2566
Police Offences Bill Inquiry, Report presented ... ..	2567
Bill: Fremantle Harbour Trust Act Amendment, 2R. resumed, adjourned ... ..	2567
Estimates, Debate on Finance concluded, Votes discussed ... ..	2574
Stock Route, Exploration Report, Goldfields to Kimberley ... ..	2606
Adjournment for Royal Show ... ..	2606

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

### PRAYERS.

### ELECTION VOIDED, GERALDTON.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received a communication with respect to the Geraldton seat. I will simply read the latter portion, which is as follows:—"I do hereby declare the said election null and void." Then there is an order as to costs.

THE PREMIER: I move—

That the seat be declared vacant.

MR. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): Before the motion is put, I would like to briefly draw attention to the peculiar circumstances surrounding this case, and

the fact of the member occupying his seat from the time the petition was first heard until the decision was given. It is true the Premier did draw attention to the point previous to the member taking his seat; and the member also drew attention to the fact, and said he did not desire to do anything illegal, but said that owing to the utterances of the Premier and the desire of his constituents in Geraldton he thought he would take his seat, and he accordingly did so. At that time an attempt was made to have a discussion on the question, but you, Mr. Speaker, ruled it out of order because there had only been personal explanations on the part of the Premier and of the member. One can imagine under circumstances of this description a Government could use a position similar to the one under review to their own betterment and advantage. Let us imagine that this seat would constitute a majority on the Government side. The decision of the Chief Justice on the election petition should be dealt with, and the member whose seat was in dispute should not take his seat; for it could be urged by the Government that he should take his seat, and the Government could use that vote to pass measures and possibly to improve their position. Although it does not apply in this case, such circumstances might arise which would allow the Government to use a position of this sort with undue advantage to themselves; consequently I am justified in drawing attention to this matter. Let us look for a moment at the facts that led up to the petition.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to draw the member's attention to the fact that this matter cannot be debated, except the discussion is made relevant to the case. The question before the House is that the seat be declared vacant. The member cannot make any remarks except on the question before the House.

MR. JOHNSON: I have considered that matter, but I thought that on the question that the seat be declared vacant it would be distinctly relevant to discuss the matter.

MR. SPEAKER: I hold a different view. Beyond the mere fact of the question being before the House, the discussion can have no effect even if the member opposes it, for it is provided that when

the motion is moved and passed the seat shall be declared vacant. Can the member point to any incident which would have the effect of opposing the motion? I want to conduct the business of the House in a business-like manner, and I ask the hon. member to confine himself to the question before the House.

MR. JOHNSON: I bow to your ruling, but I wish to explain. This is a unique case, and it is not likely that such a case will happen again for some considerable time, and on going through *May* and other authorities on the question I have been unable to discover a similar case. Seeing it is a unique position, I was under the impression that you would allow me to discuss the point in order to assist Parliament to provide against a similar occurrence in the future. And again it should be borne in mind that when the Premier brought forward the question in the first case, the member spoke to that question, but you did not allow a debate then and we had no opportunity of discussing the question. If you rule a discussion is not relevant, I have no desire to proceed, but I should like to raise the point.

MR. SPEAKER: I am not pressing the point, but I said that the hon. member should speak relevantly to any incident which he wishes to refer to, and he must briefly review any circumstance which he has to bring before the House.

MR. JOHNSON: I have no desire to go into any long discussion of the question, but to draw attention to the fact that a petition was lodged against the return of this member; but previous to that petition being lodged a petition had been lodged against the member for East Fremantle. Following on that petition an application was made for the right of appeal, and owing to the Government recognising the right of appeal, an appeal to the High Court was lodged. Had not the Government recognised an appeal, no appeal to the High Court would have been made, because the Government would have taken action to declare the seat vacant immediately, and the Chief Justice would have declared the Geraldton seat vacant. But as soon as the Government recognised the right of appeal the Chief Justice, although he had come to a decision in regard to the Geraldton petition and had made up his mind that

the seat should be declared null and void, was obliged, owing to the action of the Government, to withhold his decision pending the appeal which the Government had recognised. In this particular case, the Attorney General at that time was acting on behalf of the respondent in connection with the East Fremantle election petition, and the Attorney General was the adviser of the Government, and the Governor was advised to take action, or the Government were advised that an appeal was allowable. Acting on that advice the Governor allowed the petition to be held over pending the appeal to the High Court; so the Chief Justice was thereby prevented from delivering his judgment in regard to the Geraldton petition. Had the Government not taken that action the Chief Justice would have delivered his judgment on the petition, and the Geraldton election would have been over long ago. But owing to the action of the Government the decision of the Chief Justice was reserved until recently, and in the meantime we have had the member sitting here, although all the circumstances pointed to the fact that the election had been recognised as null and void, though the decision had not been given. And I contend that although the Judge had not given a decision, he had arrived at the conclusion that the member was disqualified; yet we find the Premier advising the member to take his seat and record votes in this House. Although the position is unique, I do claim that the Government erred in giving that advice to the member; and I raise this point simply to advise the Government to exercise a little more judgment in the future, and not to utilise a member's vote in such circumstances, when possibly that vote may make all the difference in the fate of a measure or the fate of the Government.

MR. T. WALKER (Kauowna): I do not wish to prolong the discussion, but I think we ought to emphasise the fact that this seat has practically been vacant since the petition was lodged and the case heard in the court created by this Assembly. The point now is: the hon. member has been to all intents and purposes illegally sitting, and it ought to be remarked that the Government have

acted, and I think the member has acted, to put it mildly, with censurable indiscretion; for had the member happened to sit on this side, would the same course have been taken? [THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly.] Why certainly? The Attorney General is always quoting precedents, and no precedent can be found for such a course as was taken. In any other Assembly the self-respect of the Government and the self-respect of the member would have kept him out of the Chamber from the moment when his seat was challenged. That has been the precedent everywhere; but with the connivance, the encouragement, and the sanction deliberately expressed in this Assembly by the Premier, the member has been sitting here helping the Government, and we have had the spectacle of the Attorney General defending the legality of that action, right in the teeth of the law as we now know, and as was pointed out to him, though he would not see the point. We heard the Attorney General fortifying the sitting member, the Government, and their supporters in the course they took. The affair has been, I am sure, more or less of a scandal to the State, a scandal that would in most States have led to a vote of censure being moved on the Government who ventured to go to so extreme a length in order to preserve on the Government side of the House a seat which was so clearly held illegally, as has now been declared by law.

THE PREMIER: In reply to preceding speakers, one of the motives that actuated the Government in suggesting to the member that he would be in due order if he took his seat, was that the constituency which he represented should not be disfranchised. There was no object in firing out the hon. member until judgment was actually delivered. I do not know that the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) has any foundation for saying that the Chief Justice had made up his mind as to his judgment.

MR. WALKER: He had delivered his judgment in a case on all-fours with this case.

THE PREMIER: According to Section 171 of the Electoral Act, if any person returned is declared not to have been duly elected, he shall cease to be a member of

the Council or Assembly. Consequently I take it that until judgment is delivered, he practically is a member of the House.

MR. JOHNSON: But he would not have been had you taken a legal course in connection with the East Fremantle seat.

THE PREMIER: That is another point. Suppose the Labour Government, who with their supporters numbered 22 or 24, had had a petition lodged against several of their members, would it have been fair or reasonable that those members should have retired from the House, thus leading to the defeat of the Government?

MR. TAYLOR: But the petitions under review were not bogus petitions.

THE PREMIER: But we were not aware of the judgment of the court until it was delivered; and the Government would have acted in exactly similar fashion had the seat been that of an Opposition member.

Question put and passed.

#### QUESTION—RAILWAY HOLIDAY FARES.

MR. TROY, for Mr. Bath, asked the Minister for Railways: Will he take steps to see that the reduced holiday fares on our railways, to come into force at the end of the month, shall be based on the same mileage rates from goldfields stations as appertain to the rest of the State, as for instance between Perth, Northam, York, Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, etcetera?

THE PREMIER replied: 1. The system of cheap holiday fares introduced during the last three years took into consideration the question of steamer competition between ports, and it was not, therefore, possible to fix upon what is generally understood as a mileage basis. 2. Under special circumstances and trains lower fares were introduced as from the goldfields to Albany. 3. To apply the mileage rate of such trains to Perth and Fremantle would interfere so much with the revenue that the ordinary business traffic would suffer beyond what can be afforded. The excursion rates are now considered to be very reasonably lower than ordinary fares, and are much lower than those prevailing a few years back. 4. However, the matter is being carefully

watched, and if at all possible a special train may be run at special fares.

# POLICE OFFENCES BILL INQUIRY.

## SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL brought up the report of the select committee.

Report received and read; the evidence ordered to be printed, also the amendments recommended.

# BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

## POWER TO BORROW, DOCK, ETC.

### SECOND READING.

Resumed from the 18th October, the MINISTER FOR WORKS in charge of the Bill.

MR. T. WALKER (Kadowna): I feel a little nervous in attacking this measure, especially after what I have seen in the public Press; and I would like to know if the Minister for Works is responsible for what appeared in the Fremantle journal on Monday, September 24th.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not seen it.

MR. WALKER: The paper says:—

In connection with the statements which were current in Perth and Fremantle re the alleged neglect of the affairs of the Port by the present Government, an *Evening Mail* representative called at the office of the Public Works Department.

I presume, therefore, he called on the Minister for Works; and the report, which repeatedly mentions the Minister for Works, goes on to say:—

There is sure to be a certain amount of opposition to the Bill, notably from members of Perth and surrounding constituencies; and perhaps it will mean a tough fight before the Bill is finally carried. The Labour party, for their own benefit, should vote for the Bill.

Then it goes on to say:—

Work will be provided for those at present unemployed, but also for political reasons. All parties and classes in Fremantle are in favour of the Bill, and if it is lost through the efforts of the Labour party, that fact will be extremely detrimental to their interests at ensuing elections in the district.

MR. TAYLOR: That is like the Minister for Works.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Those are not my words at all.

MR. WALKER: I beg your pardon; this statement is reported to have emanated from the office of the Public Works Department, and the Minister for Works is repeatedly mentioned in it. I presume the paper professes here only to be giving the sentiments of officers of the Works Department and of the Minister for Works; and in this profession the Labour party is intimidated.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in explanation): These remarks read are not mine at all. I take it that the article is an expression of opinion of the paper itself; and I ask that the statement that these are my remarks be withdrawn.

MR. WALKER: I have not distinctly said they were the remarks of the hon. member; but in order to set the point exactly right as to how this connection comes in, I will read the full text. Thus far I have only read those portions which I thought were an attempt at intimidation of the Labour party. The article reads thus:—

### *The Harbour Trust Bill.*

In connection with the statements which were current in Fremantle re the alleged neglect of the affairs of the Port by the present Government, an *Evening Mail* representative called at the office of the Public Works Department in order to discover, if possible, how matters stood at the present time.

That sets out that the object was to find out how matters stand; then it professes to report how matters do stand, and it goes on to say:—

As already stated, this Bill has been withdrawn from the Upper House (where it was brought forward by the Colonial Secretary) for constitutional reasons, and it is now the intention of the Minister for Works to bring it before the Lower House not later than next week.

That is no opinion of the newspaper. He made a mistake there, I admit.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is where the interview ended, so far as I am concerned.

MR. WALKER: The article continues thus:—

There is sure to be a certain amount of opposition to the Bill, notably from members of Perth and surrounding constituencies, and

perhaps it will mean a tough fight before the Bill is finally carried. The Labour party, for their own benefit, should vote for the Bill, not only because, if it is carried, a large amount of work will be provided for those at present unemployed, but also for political reasons. All parties and classes in Fremantle are in favour of the Bill, and if it is lost through the efforts of the Labour party, that fact will be extremely detrimental to their interests at ensuing elections in the district. It has been suggested that the personnel of the Harbour Trust Board should be altered.

The full statement of the facts is there. I have disguised nothing. It seems to me to infer, although I accept the Minister's denial, that the Minister for Works had taken this indirect method of telling the Labour party that they ought to vote for the Bill. I may be excused for having, perhaps wrongfully, taken that impression, because these are practically the sentiments the Minister for Works gave utterance to whilst fighting the Fremantle election. They are his statements made on the public platform; and now he is coming forward with a Bill which does not go even so far as his statements then made carried him. At the Fremantle election, he promised distinctly that there should be a dock granted for the electors. With a beautiful photograph of himself, he printed the clear and distinct pledge that there should be this dock at Fremantle, and that if he were not elected they would not get that dock, that he was the man to get that dock for them, that that was a Government promise—and it was a promise, I submit, reiterated by the supporters of the hon. member, the members of the Government speaking at his meetings. Now what are the facts? This Bill itself clearly declares that the Government have departed from that promise made at the Fremantle election, for the Bill does not make the Government responsible for any dock at all. The Government do not take any responsibility in that respect. They leave it to the option of certain commissioners who shall form the Harbour Trust. That is the purpose of the Bill; and in order that the commissioners may have the power of doing this if they think fit, powers of borrowing are especially provided in this measure. They can borrow money for the purpose, and that to me is the evil of this measure, that it does not make the Government re-

sponsible for the construction of that dock. I will set the hon. member's mind at ease, if necessary. I may say that to my knowledge there is scarcely one, if there be one, on this side of the House who is not in favour of a dock for Fremantle. We feel the necessity; we want it, but we want it done openly, and we want it so that we may have a say in it, if necessary, that it may be placed under the power of responsible parties; that is to say that the Government must take the responsibility of this dock, and the cost of it and the character of it must be submitted to this House for its final decision before it passes, like any other great public work. Why should the Harbour Trust have powers that no other public bodies in this State possess? If this dock be a necessity, and we are not denying it is, why the fear of the Government to assume the responsibility of it? Why give it to these irresponsible bodies? Time and time again, until I fear members of this House are weary of me. I have protested against this constant whittling away of the responsibility of the Government. In every other State of the world the Government take the responsibility of their conduct, for the management of all the great public concerns. Why this departure here? We are whittling away everything that requires intelligence, direction, and government. The Government have delegated duties to irresponsible boards until the whole country is run in such a way that it is completely out of touch with the people of the State. The representatives of the people can give no criticism upon it, and form no judgment, and their protests against it in any form are unavailing. That is the position we are being reduced to by measures of this kind. Every great public undertaking should stand on its own bottom, so to speak. This is a great public undertaking, and the Government should therefore have the courage to bring forth a Bill for the construction of a graving dock at Fremantle. We could respect their courage if they did that. But what do they do? In this measure they propose to give power to the commissioners who will compose the Harbour Trust to borrow money (a) for the completion and extension of harbour works, (b) to discharge the probable money of any existing loan

or for the consolidation of the debts of the commissioners, (c.) for any other purpose—we do not know where this is going to end, it may be to build a ladder to the moon for anything we know—approved by the Governor. The term “harbour works” includes any basin, graving dock, slip, dock. Why the two are included I do not know, because it is a graving dock that the people there want; but this evidently is a chance given them to escape—they can have a floating dock if they want one. The definition alludes to graving dock, slip, dock, pier, quay, wharf, jetty, bridge, viaduct, breakwater, embankment, or dam. This would seem to be a direction. I should have thought the Government by this measure had absolutely pledged themselves to the construction of a graving dock in Fremantle, but there is nothing in the Bill declaring that to be the policy of the Government in any sense. It certainly gives the power to these commissioners, if they get the approval of the Governor, to construct a graving dock, or a slip, or any kind of dock that may then be deemed discreet. Is it not a marked feature of the policy of this country to provide accommodation for merchant ships to visit us, or in days to come for our own fleet in all possibility, and is it no concern whatsoever to the Government in power as to whether a mere floating dock, or a stronger, a secure, a more useful graving dock be constructed? Is that a matter of indifference that it may be left to anybody, that it may be left for the time being to those who chance to be in the position of commissioners, without any regard whatsoever to the policy of the country? Should not the Ministry, in a matter of such vital importance to the future welfare of this State, take the responsibility entirely? Have they no opinion as to what kind of a dock is required at Fremantle? Are they quite willing to say, “Oh, you see to it; it is not our business, it is yours. You look to that. You tell the country what it wants. We will endorse all you have done. No matter; go ahead”—is that the policy of the Government? Is that what this State is reduced to—no courage in their own convictions? Is this a way of getting out of the promises made by the Minister for Works at Fremantle? Is this a way of shelving the

responsibility? Is this a chance of enabling them to say, “We gave the power to commissioners to do it, but they have not done it; it is not our fault; we cannot help it”? Is this everlasting building of a fence round their responsibilities, shelving the blame, the opprobrium for their misconduct and neglect, the kind of government we have in Parliament? Have the Government no backbone to father a policy? What is of greater importance to this country than the management of our ports, our harbours? Next to the communication through the interior, next to making roads and building railways as arteries for commerce and travel, the door by means of which we are letting in the rest of the world or sending our products over the highways of the seas, so to speak, is of importance. Next to railways the harbour stands first, and in our Railway Act we have specially taken care that matters of policy regarding construction, where railways shall run, what kinds of railways they shall be, and to a certain extent what they shall cost, are reserved to responsibility. We have taken away from this Assembly, it is true, in the Railways Act the power to supervise management. We can no longer interfere with Mr. George as to how he will treat his servants or run the details of that immense asset. But on policy, and that is the point, we have reserved our right to criticise. The Government must come down, when they have any special railway to build, be it ever so small, be it only a spur line, to this House and ask permission of the Assembly, and get the authority of both Houses of Parliament, before the work can be undertaken. But here what can they do? A body of irresponsible commissioners, whom we cannot reach, whom we cannot touch or criticise, or if we do it we do it vainly, can inflict on this country untold expense. It is true, I will admit, that the loan proposed must be submitted to the Governor. But what does that mean? It means the Cabinet for the time being, the Cabinet consisting of six members. A majority only of that Cabinet, four out of the six, can carry any public work they please in connection with these harbour works, under the recommendations of the Harbour Trust, and it is quite possible that when this Harbour Trust gets in—it

altogether depends upon who constitute this Harbour Trust—at any particular time it may absolutely propose works that are detrimental to the development of this State, through our harbour gates. It may happen in this very instance that they will not propose a graving dock, fearing that the responsibility would be too great, that they might not obtain enough in dues for the interest and sinking fund, and that if they could not make the thing pay to their satisfaction their positions would be in danger. Therefore the possibilities, if not the probabilities, are that in this case instead of Fremantle having a permanent graving dock, the Government will be asked to give authority for borrowing money for a floating dock. It may be of value to them, I admit. While we are doing things for a great country that has grown at the rate this State has, so that no man can prophesy really what this country will be 20 years hence, it is a piece of folly to fool with great public undertakings, with great public works, as may be done by these commissioners. If it were the Government who undertook a foolish piece of work, a work that would have to be removed or substituted by a better work a few years hence, we should know how to attack them, and moreover we should take the responsibility, if that became law, because every member in this House would have then the opportunity of bringing his experience and his knowledge to bear, and his criticism to correct any case of error. But here no criticism, no power of analysis or review in any form, is permitted. Four members of the Cabinet can endorse the action of this board, and this House has not one word to say on the matter. Can it not be conceived that allowing these commissioners this right may be a serious detriment to Fremantle instead of being a benefit to it? We have commissioners now who are already suspected. The article from which I have quoted goes on to say that the composition of the Trust should be altered. [Interjection by the MINISTER FOR WORKS.] I am speaking now of what is said to be the fact.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You left that alone just now.

MR. WALKER: I read that portion. The hon. gentleman has a bad memory. Is it not a fact that there are doubts as

to the qualifications, to put it in the mildest form, of those commissioners who are entering on their positions? Is it not suggested that the constitution of the Trust shall be altered? And if so, how know we who may be there? Whether we shall derive benefit from the services rendered depends on whether we have the best possible men in a position of that kind. Men of incapacity, men of narrow mind, men of limited judgment, men of small experience, may commit the State to a policy which may do injury for years to come. But this is the point above all which I want to impress upon the Minister. The administration of a policy in the way of public works is decidedly a Ministerial duty, which should not be removed from Ministers under any circumstances. It is their duty to see that the policy which will be the best for the State—not only for Fremantle, but for the whole State—should be entered upon as speedily as possible. But how can we know it will be so when they shirk their duties and place all blame upon the irresponsible Trust, and I again say, those whom we cannot touch, criticize, or reach in any form or shape? How can those men take the responsibility? How can Ministers govern for the best interests of this State when they delegate such important matters as these to this board? And mark this. It is a time of financial crisis we are entering upon, when this State will have all it can do to borrow money, if it wants to, a few years hence, not very long from now; and this Government, I predict, if it remains in the bondage it is in, will not be able to borrow a fraction. It will have to go to the Commonwealth and ask to let it have a little to go on with.

THE PREMIER: We can get plenty of money now, without going outside Australia for it.

MR. WALKER: It is a debt, whether it is got in or out of Australia.

THE PREMIER: But you are saying we cannot get the money.

MR. WALKER: I say that by-and-by, before you will be able to get any money at all you will have to ask permission of the Commonwealth—they will not allow you to borrow money as you like and go on in this extravagant form. That is the point I am making. I am

not denying that if a loan were properly put on the market you could get the money in Australia to-morrow; but I am speaking of the relationship likely to be established in the future between the State and the Commonwealth. Beyond doubt this Bill is for the purpose of borrowing money, it may be recklessly, and the presumption is that it is going to be recklessly because even this newspaper article, which got inspired somehow in the Works Department, insinuates that the passing of the Bill will bring money enough into the State, or will cause money to be collected at Fremantle, in sufficient quantity to absorb all the unemployed labour. That is the position. But how far can we trust this irresponsible borrowing to go on?—for mark you, it is the State that is responsible for the loans borrowed by this body. Is it not an anomaly that the State, the Government, the people are responsible for whatever money the Harbour Trust may borrow?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It will be. If it were not so, the Trust could not borrow above a certain amount.

**MR. WALKER:** They cannot borrow more money than is specially provided for; but after the money has been borrowed, if the works do not pay, if they do not come up to scratch, there is power given to the Governor, to the Government to review and to alter the Trust's method of working if the rates do not bring in the necessary amount to cover sinking fund and interest. What if there be an absolute deficiency at any time?—for the Government, no more than anybody else, can command the shipping in Fremantle harbour. An era may come when the amount of shipping may fall away. If the port of Esperance were opened, for instance, Fremantle would not be able to get the amount of shipping traffic it now does; and what then? The taxpayer would have to come in, and from our revenue we would have to meet the obligations put upon us by this irresponsible body. The taxpayer, after all, is the responsible party; his pocket is reached, and when a man's pocket is reached is he to have no say, no voice as to what is done there? I object to making an exception of this dock; I object to giving to one section of the State a power that is not permitted to

others. Will the Government give to municipalities, in order to do necessary local works irresponsibly, power to borrow money, and the Government to be responsible in the end? Why should they give this special power to the Harbour Trust?

**THE PREMIER:** We give to municipalities power to borrow up to ten times the amount of their annual income.

**MR. WALKER:** Yes; but do the Government take the responsibility in connection with municipal borrowing, as they propose to do in this Bill? Are the municipal revenues subject to review and amendment by the Government in the same way as in the case of the power given to the Harbour Trust? Are the Government practically the trustees, as they are for this Trust? The Premier will see the distinction, that this is making a speciality of the Harbour Trust at Fremantle. No one of the members of that board is infallible or immaculate; they are not made of more than ordinary blood and flesh and bone; they are of the same stock as the ordinary run of humanity; and after the errors we hear of daily on the part of public officers, of men in high positions, the blunders and mistakes in regard to public works and public undertakings, can we place in the hands of this body the power to borrow money for any work it may deem fit in connection with the harbour, without looking into the matter, and particularly with regard to this special dock, which was the pledge and promise, the stepping-stone to office of the Minister for Works? What can we see in these men that we should especially trust them with such extraordinary powers? When we gave necessary powers in regard to that larger asset the railways, we have reserved the right to decide in regard to new works, new undertakings, or new loans, as a matter of policy; and is it less a matter of public policy, our harbour at Fremantle, a matter which should be intimately under the cognisance of this House at every step? Our future depends on it; the whole State more or less is concerned in that harbour; and we are handing it over to three or four men to do as they like with it, to allow them to borrow money as they think fit, without being liable to the criticism or the judgment of members of this House.



That is wrong in principle; it is against all the best traditions of British Government; and why is it done? Are the members of the Ministry too lazy or too incapable of doing what their predecessors have done, what is done in New South Wales and in other parts of the world? There they have a department of harbours and rivers as a special department: sometimes it is part of the public works department, as in Sydney. But here the obligation is delegated, it is taken out of the Government altogether; and it is a farce to say we are governed, when men we cannot reach or bring to book in any form are permitted to take upon themselves the initiation of great public works in which the whole policy of the State is involved. It is ridiculous, to my mind. It cannot have been considered at all by the Government. I thoroughly approve of this graving dock. I should like to see it set about as speedily as possible, consistently of course with the requirements of other parts of the country. I am not in favour of spending all the available money on Fremantle for the benefit, the safety of the Minister's seat; but I am in favour of whatever will advance the interests of this State and put us on a sound footing both in regard to internal development and to our relationship with other parts of the world. But the Government should take the responsibility of doing this, instead of handing that responsibility over to a board which must necessarily be liable to all the errors, indiscretions, failures, and human weaknesses of a board that is answerable to no one. That is my objection to the Bill; and it is the only feature of the Bill to which I do object. I think I have made that clear enough; I have emphasised it to the best of my ability. I feel strongly upon it, and having shown this, I need now only add that it is my intention, when the Bill is in Committee, to do my best to get the removal of those clauses giving these extraordinary and unprecedented powers to an irresponsible body outside of Parliament and in no sense responsible to this House.

MR. J. BREBBER (North Perth): Before the Bill is read a second time, I desire to say that while there are portions of the Bill of which I am in favour, there

are other portions to which I strongly object. I am in favour of works of this sort being put in the hands of commissioners, after the works are completed; because I consider they can then be far better managed in the hands of business people who have experience in that class of work, who can carry them on practically and to the best advantage. But in regard to a work of this kind, which will affect the whole of the State and be a work for all time, I think it is the duty of the Government to see that such works are put in hand by their own initiation. It would be a calamity if an irresponsible board were appointed, and as a result a dock were constructed which would not be suited to the requirements of the increased traffic that may be expected to come to the port of Fremantle. We have had instances in Perth of boards carrying out public works which I think have proved a great mistake, and a detriment to the works on which they were engaged. I shall instance the Metropolitan Waterworks, which were managed by an irresponsible body without experience of that description of work, which practically wasted the funds of the State, and gave to Perth a water supply that is a disgrace. The board squandered money on bores and other temporary works, which only resulted in bringing discredit on themselves and on the city. I only mention this as instancing the big mistake this House will make if it places works of this nature in the hands of any board whatever. The great success of our goldfields water scheme was due to the fact that it was initiated and carried out under the control of the Government, and that after its successful completion it has been placed in the hands of a commission which knows how to work it to the best advantage. I say advisedly that had that scheme been placed in the hands of a Commission before its completion, then when the time arrived for supplying the goldfields, it would not have been able to meet the demands. The Government of that time grasped the question more firmly, and have provided a supply which will suffice for all time. That is the policy which should be adopted in connection with this harbour movement. I desire to draw the attention of the House to the report submitted by the consulting engineer engaged by the Government

(Mr. Keele) to report on this question. The only quotation I will make is a short one, to show how great a mistake it would be for the Government to hand over the construction of this great work to an irresponsible body outside the Ministers and Government of this State. The first question to be considered by the Harbour Trust would be whether it is advisable to have a floating or a graving dock at Fremantle. The engineer from whose report I am quoting says in regard to a floating dock :—

This class of dock appears to have reached the limit of its efficiency, namely the capacity to lift a vessel safely of 500 ft. long and 10,000 or 11,000 tons displacement. As it is not improbable that vessels up to 600 or 700 ft. long, with a displacement up to 17,000 to 20,000 tons, may hereafter require docking at Fremantle, it is certain that the owners would look for the most absolute security in any dock before they would allow the vessel to enter it. It is very noticeable that large floating docks are used only where there is a difficulty in obtaining a suitable site for a graving dock.

That is one of the difficulties pointed out by this engineer; and if we place the control and opening up of the Swan River in the hands of an irresponsible body, we shall be running a risk of having a dock of this class placed at Fremantle, which would only be useful for one class of vessel and not for larger vessels which may come to this State. Going a little farther, I would point out that this engineer took into consideration no fewer than seven sites for a dock in the Swan River, and condemned all but two. One of those did not condemn, and which he recommended, was for a graving dock at Rocky Bay. He had looked into the question of opening the river, and chose that one out of the seven. But he says that is a situation for a graving dock which cannot be excelled. I would like to read to the House his words, because they will have more weight with the House than any language I can use. He says in reference to the river :—

Swelling out at Freshwater Bay and Melville Water into a land-locked harbour, which even now embraces an area of three and three-quarter square miles of 18ft. and over, two and a-quarter square miles of 24ft. and over, and one and a-half square miles of 30ft. and over, at low water, which would be sufficient, if some shoals were removed, to afford a safe and sheltered anchorage for the whole fleet of warships on the station.

That is the area of water which we have in Freshwater Bay, near the site where he recommends the dry dock shall be placed.

THE PREMIER: Is that Keele's report?

MR. BREBBER: It is Keele's report. He says again :—

The bay is so sheltered from high winds that no inconvenience whatever would be felt by vessels taking the dock. In fact, the site for the dock is almost an ideal one. Butler's Hump is a conspicuous, low, rocky projection centrally situated on the western shore of Freshwater Bay. From the surface indications the excavations throughout for the entire dock would be in the calcareous sandstone characteristic of the locality, which would be a great saving in expense in building the foundations and side walls, as compared with any other site yet proposed.

He goes on to say it would be a model site for a dock, and the foundations are practically secure, and he farther states :

Lastly, but not least, the dock and its establishment would be naturally protected from an enemy's fire.

I do not intend to quote farther from this report because it is at the service of the House; but when the Government have a report like this for their guidance, and when they are going to throw aside the advice the engineer has given and place the carrying out of the duties in the hands of an irresponsible body, the Government are taking up a position they ought not to take. There is no greater work for the State than the opening up of the river. We have a river here which can be made one of the finest and safest harbours in Australasia, and we should not allow any irresponsible body to take that work in hand for the sake possibly of obtaining political prestige. It is high time the House and the Government should see that these persons are not allowed to mould the usefulness of a harbour of that sort to suit political ends. I do not wish to detain the House. The only reason I spoke is that I recognise the importance of the question. I recognise there is a danger of a huge blunder being committed on this question, and I think the House should see that the blunder is not made. The late Premier, Mr. James, recognised the importance of this question and resumed land all round the river for the purpose of making provision for vessels of all tonnage and size having safe access

to and navigation in the river. I hold that one Government having gone as far as that, the present Government should see that the work is completed under their own direction; and from that point and that point alone I rose to object to anything else being done. If the work is completed by the Government I have no objection to its being superintended by a board, for the completed work could be better managed by practical men. But I shall use all the power I can to prevent the Bill becoming law, unless the Government will take the power to protect the river, and that the House shall formulate a scheme to be carried out.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (West Perth): I would like to have an assurance from the Government that they intend to maintain control of the harbour, to the extent of the graving dock at any rate. A big work of this character ought to be decided by Parliament. It is one of those questions on which there will be many adverse opinions, and it is one of those questions that ought to be submitted to the representatives of the people. I object to the handing over of the powers of Parliament to any irresponsible body, especially works of this character and of this extent and magnitude. I am of opinion, although perhaps I am not in a position to express an opinion through want of knowledge, that we should have a graving dock and not a floating dock. I am utterly opposed to a floating dock, and the House should have control of the question. Now that the harbour is largely completed, it is desirable to have a Bill of this character to give the necessary control over minor works and contracts and the conduct of the harbour itself to a body of practical persons. It would relieve the Government of a deal of work, and the Government might probably make mistakes; therefore it would be better to have the control of the harbour in the hands of men well adapted to the work which they will give attention to. But as to the construction, we have so far constructed the harbour under Government control, and it was a success under the Engineer-in-Chief we had then, and other officers who have been able to farther extend the harbour; but this is a question of great magnitude,

the construction of a graving dock. The question now—it seems altogether foolish that it should be raised at all—is between a graving dock and a floating dock. It is a question that ought to have been settled in the minds of members long ago. I think in regard to this Bill unless we have some assurance from the Government that they will consent to the removal of this item of the graving dock from the Bill, it will be necessary almost to vote against the measure. The Bill itself is good in many particulars, but it is proposed to hand over a contract of this character to an irresponsible board. That is one proposition I cannot possibly support. If the Government will give an assurance that they will accept an amendment to strike out the graving dock from the Bill, I shall be satisfied with the measure, placing the control and management of this harbour and graving dock, or any work of this character, in the hands of a board. If the Government are going to hand the whole matter over to this board, I would rather lose the Bill than give such power to an irresponsible body. I hope the Government will see their way to give an assurance of the acceptance of an amendment of this character in Committee. If not, I shall be disposed to vote against the Bill.

On motion by MR. JOHNSON, debate adjourned.

#### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1906-7.

##### IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

##### DEBATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Resumed from the previous day, MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

Vote—*His Excellency the Governor*, £1,148:

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): I desire to reply to one or two criticisms which were levelled at the Government the last time this matter was under discussion, by the member for Subiaco, the member for Guildford, and the member for Kanowna. I think the figures with which the member for Subiaco regaled the House are capable of a totally different construction from that which he put on them. The statement was made that there was absolutely no decrease in the cost of administration

so far as the present Government were concerned, and I think the member in comparing the Estimates of the year 1904-5 with those of 1906-7, that is the year he was administering the affairs with the present year, stated that the increased salaries amounted to something between £23,000 and £24,000. That seems a serious statement, and one which if it were true would necessarily cause a considerable amount of alarm in the minds of the general public. I have very carefully gone through the salaries of both Estimates, and have absolutely failed to find out how the member arrived at the excess of £23,000 odd in this year's Estimates for salaries as against the salaries for the year 1904-5. I can only assume that he must have taken into consideration an increase of some £20,735 in the wages and salaries for State batteries. In that connection the estimated revenue for State batteries this year is an increase of £23,000 on the revenue for the year 1904-5, so that it would be a manifestly unfair thing to credit the extra expenditure incurred owing to the increased number of State batteries as against administrative salaries. There is another very important item which the member drew attention to—the difference in the figures between this year and the year he was in office—and to which I wish to refer. I refer to the increase of salaries in the educational vote this year over the year the hon. member was in power, which amounts to £22,644, a necessary increase. We find with machinery inspection, added to the boiler inspection there is an increase of £909 as against the year 1904-5. Then we find the completion of the rabbit-proof fence has led to an increase of £2,500 a year in the charges against that fence. We find the cost of salaries for the Gaols amounts to £905—in all these cases I am referring to salaries—Lunacy, £1,095; Medical and Public Health, £1,393; Police, £266; and Railways, £5,396. Most of these increases represent salaries which are the direct outcome of the increased functions of government. In no sense can they be termed moneys expended on purely administrative votes. Let us look at the extra £22,000 spent on education. That involves so many extra teachers in our schools; on the

State batteries the extra expenditure involves so much more ore crushed, so many more men employed; on our rabbit-proof fence a greater length of fence to be patrolled and kept in order; in our Medical Department a greater amount to be expended on relieving and attending to the sick poor; and on our Railways an extra sum of £5,396 to be expended owing to expansion in traffic. If we come to the other side we find that in what are really administrative departments, where expenses by good management and by economy can be cut down, there is a general and considerable reduction. For instance in Printing, our estimate for this year is some £2,691 less than for the year 1904-5. In the Lands Department the estimates for Lands and Surveys and Woods and Forests are some £8,966 less; and in Public Works the salaries, taking loan and revenue together, are some £9,201 less than in the year when our friends opposite (Labour party) were in charge. I venture to say that the figures I have quoted directly show that the statements of the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) tend to give to the general public an absolutely incorrect impression. But as an actual fact, in great departments like the Lands and Works, where economy of administration has existed for some time, that saving is now actually taking place. I wish to point out the position of members opposite when in power as compared with the position of the present Government. We find that the revenue the Labour Government received in the year 1904-5 exceeded the revenue which we estimate to receive by some £23,127. We find that this year we have to provide for increased Education charges amounting to some £22,644; that for Police we have to find £2,266; for expenses of the rabbit-proof fence, £2,500; Medical and Public Health, £1,393; Lunacy, £1,095; Gaols, £905; machinery inspection, £909; and we find that the fixed charges on loan account have increased this year as against the year with which I am comparing these figures by £99,035. If to these amounts we add the amount of drift which took place in the public expenditure during the term of office of the Daglish Government, taking into account the surplus which they found when they took office and the

deficit which they left when they went out, we find that another £129,885 has to be added, making in all, owing to lessened charges on such votes as Education and Public Health, to the increased revenue which they expected to receive, and to the excess of expenditure over income, a sum of £283,759 more than we have at our command. Is it at all astonishing in these circumstances that their estimates for public works in 1904-5 should have been £337,927 as against the £228,931 estimated for this year?

MR. TAYLOR: It is, in view of all the promises you made.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think I have conclusively shown, and no unbiased person carefully studying these figures can come to any other conclusion, that the finances are on the high road to being put straight; that in the great administrative departments, considerable savings have been effected. The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) took me very severely to task for the conduct of the Works Department with respect to roads boards; and he was backed up in his criticisms by the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker). I desire to call attention to the state of affairs which existed in connection with some roads boards when the hon. member (Mr. Johnson) was administering the department over which I now have the honour to preside. I wish to draw attention to the amount of rates collected by some of these boards, and to the annual and special grants which I believe—I do not wish to do injustice—the hon. member was responsible. I fully recognise that as to many of these boards it would be invidious to mention their names, because as a matter of fact many of them have seen the error of their ways, and I am pleased to say that this year, owing to the policy of the department, 37 boards have increased their rates, and the increased rating will lead to the collection of some £7,000 to £8,000 more than the same boards collected last year.

MR. JOHNSON: You are simply reaping the result of other people's efforts.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not reaping the result of my own efforts or anything of my own initiation; but I am most distinctly reaping the reward of a reform initiated by my pre-

decessor, the present Treasurer (Hon. Frank Wilson).

MR. SCADDAN: Rubbish! Look up your file.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member interjecting has only to read last week's *Hansard* to see that the present action of the department in this respect was strongly criticised by the member for Guildford. That can be easily referred to; and the same remark applies to the speech of the member for Kanowna. We find boards which collected sums of £70 in the year receiving from the hon. member (Mr. Johnson) £700 in grants. Another board collected £38 2s. in the year.

MR. TAYLOR: Which board?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member can get the particulars from the Public Works Report. I do not wish to be too harsh on the boards, many of which have improved their rating since that date. One board which collected £38 2s. received annual and special grants amounting to £525. Another sinner collecting £44 19s. 11d. received from the hon. member £850; another collecting £42 14s. 11d. received a grant of £950; and another collecting £34 5s. received £350. Going through this portion of the roads boards reports we find board after board receiving undue subsidies. I do not mean that the money they received from the Government was not well and faithfully expended; but I do say it was absolutely ridiculous to give those people eight, nine, and ten times as much as they collected. It only needed a little pressure brought to bear, and they must have recognised their responsibility and increased their rating as they have done this year. I venture to think that for the hon. member to criticise my department because of this action is absolutely contrary to the public interest.

MR. JOHNSON: The hon. member did not criticise the department for the action you mention. I do not want you to base your subsidy absolutely on rates. If you do, you work an absolute injustice.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There has never been any suggestion that this subsidy should be based absolutely on rates.

MR. JOHNSON: That was suggested by one Minister.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It has never been suggested that the subsidy to roads boards should be based entirely on rates.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Then what are you arguing about?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The hon. member can explain subsequently.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I am arguing that rating should certainly be taken into consideration with other factors, when subsidies are granted; and the hon. member must be aware of that. He finds as a matter of fact that he has criticised the department unfairly, and in a manner that will receive public disapproval; and now he wishes to squeeze out of the difficulty. The position is plain enough; and I venture to think that the departmental action initiated by the Treasurer will receive universal approval. We have been told that the Government have stolen the policy of members opposite.

**MR. TAYLOR:** You have been told the truth.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I did not expect the truth from the hon. member, anyhow. To that proposition I not only dissent now, but have always most strongly dissented. Because members on that side and many on this happen to hold some belief in common, it does not follow that such belief is the exclusive property of either side; and because we on this side have this year introduced a tax on unimproved land values, that is no reason why the other side should say we have stolen their policy.

**MR. TAYLOR:** You won your majority by opposing it.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** As an actual fact we did not win our majority by opposing it. On the other hand, the Premier, the Minister for Mines, the Attorney General and I, have always advocated a tax on unimproved land values; and I believe other members on the Treasury bench have advocated a tax on unimproved land. We were told that the policy enunciated at Midland Junction by Mr. Rason was one of no fresh taxation whatever. I venture to say that is an absolute misstatement; and I may be allowed to read Mr. Rason's speech on the subject. Referring to the taxation proposals of his predecessor Mr. Rason

in his policy speech reported in the *West Australian* of the 11th September 1905 referred to three sources of revenue, namely income tax £20,000, land tax £30,000, totalizator tax £12,000. He said:—

These would only of necessity produce £31,000 in the six months that was available to him; and rather than trifle with increased taxation for such a small amount, which would produce only £31,000 for six months, he would go without it, and see whether he and those associated with him could not without retrenchment make both ends meet. It would therefore follow that he did not propose to introduce any farther taxation this year. [That was in 1905.] They could not shut their eyes to the fact that they were dealing with a constantly diminishing revenue, and that in the near future some increased taxation would be absolutely necessary. If he was in power, that increased taxation would take the shape and form of a tax on unimproved land.

To say that the present Government, after such a policy speech, are not justified in imposing any form of increased taxation, that they are pledged to make both ends meet by economy of administration only—I do not wish to belittle that, I believe we are economising—but to say that by increased taxation we are breaking our election pledges is simply, as members opposite know, to make an absolute misstatement.

**MR. TAYLOR:** What about the speech of the Honorary Minister at Northam?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I take it that the member for Mount Margaret has common sense enough to know that the policy of the Government is dictated by the policy speech of the Premier. I have quoted from the policy of Mr. Rason. I have shown that Mr. Rason in his policy speech last year clearly pointed out that in the near future some new form of taxation was necessary. To state that when we come to this House with fresh taxation measures we are breaking election pledges, is what hon. gentlemen opposite know to be distinctly false and misleading. I do not wish to refer to this question any farther. I trust that in future it will be allowed that we at least, if we desire to increase taxation in this country, are breaking no pledges by so doing. We certainly are pledged to economical administration, and I submit that the figures I gave in the early part of my remarks have distinctly shown that we have economised in administra-

tion; and I farther submit that by bringing in the new taxation we have done, we have in no sense nor in any way broken our election pledges.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison): I do not intend to delay the Committee long, but I would like to make a few remarks before the main question is put. I should very much have liked the Minister for Works in delivering his brilliant oration to inform us why we are spending so much loan money now in doing work which has hitherto been done out of revenue. It would have been some enlightenment to myself to know the reason why a great many roads, public buildings, public batteries, and other forms of public works are to be built out of loan instead of revenue. We look to the Government for enlightenment. I remember when I was in office in the Daglish Government that we were persistently twitted time after time because we did not carry out certain works; but members of the present administration, who were the foremost in twitting us, are now doing far less in the construction of works than was done when the Labour Government were in power. One thing strikes me very forcibly. When the Labour Government were in power it was continually stated by the present party in power that the cause of the depression in Western Australia was the fact that there was a Labour Government; but we find now that the depression is far worse, even worse than it has been since the discovery of gold.

MR. GULL: Quite so; and it will get worse.

MR. HOLMAN: Supporters of the present Government say, "Quite so." Why should they not be fair and just and blame it to the Government, as was done in the case of the Labour Government? But instead of doing that they repeat the parrot cry, and are urged by the present Government to throw the whole of the blame on to Federation. It is the weakest and most cowardly way of getting out of responsibility any Government has adopted. If the Labour Government were responsible for the depression that existed when they were in power, surely the present Government are responsible for the depression that now exists. We had Federation when the

Labour Government were in power, but no voice was raised then to say that the depression was caused by Federation and not by the Labour Government. Look at the expenditure now. We find that instead of doing work out of revenue we are compelled to do it out of loans. It is intended to build roads, bridges, public buildings, and to carry on mining development and the erection of public batteries out of loans. We have departed from the policy of past years, when these works were constructed out of revenue. This is going back. It is a great pity a better policy could not have been brought forward to prevent the whole of this expenditure taking place from loan funds. It would have been better to increase the taxation and let us know exactly where we stand, because it is false economy to construct these works out of loan funds, endeavouring to gull the public and lead them to believe that the Government are doing better than past Governments. A glance at the Estimates must show that the amount of money proposed to be expended this year is far less than it was in previous years; and almost without exception the small amount of money proposed to be expended this year is to be allotted to the cities and pleasure resorts, instead of being spent in the back country where its expenditure would be the means of overcoming the depression. We are to build roads to the Caves and to spend the money about the cities. In almost the first speech I made when I stood for Parliament I stated that in my opinion in the next few years we would have in Western Australia a severe depression, no matter what Government happened to be in power. I find that what I said then is true. In my opinion the only way to get rid of the depression is to open up the mineral resources better than we have done in the past. Instead of doing this the support given to the outlying districts is not nearly sufficient. We can spend thousands of pounds on the construction of roads to the Caves, but it is impossible to get a grant to construct a road to a rising goldfield. In my electorate and in other parts of the State they have to make a journey of 125 miles or 130 miles, where the distance could be traversed by a properly constructed straight road of 95

miles. If they have to travel 20 miles in the agricultural districts they consider that they must have a railway; but they consider that in the mining districts 20 or 30 miles are nothing. Before we go in for beautifying the pleasure resorts of the State we should develop our back country and make decent roads over which mining timber and everything in connection with mining can be taken. We find that in spite of the depression we have had during the past year or two the Government are quite willing to grant great concessions to the Timber Combine or to the timber companies of this State for the purpose of giving them practically a grant, despite the opposition of the Railway Commissioner. It has been said time after time that the timber freights charged in Western Australia do not more than slightly cover costs. It was estimated that if the timber freights paid working expenses, interest, and sinking fund it was about all they did. In spite of this, we find the Government have given a concession amounting to £16,000 a year to the Timber Combine at present operating in this State. The position therefore arises that we in Western Australia are taxed and have to undergo a severe depression, and have to borrow money to construct public works, roads, bridges, and batteries, while we can grant £16,000 a year to the people in India or some foreign country to construct cheap railways. It is against the best interests of the State. We have a valuable asset in the timber of the State, and under no consideration should we give a grant to foreign countries to build cheap railways at our expense. We should use the money to pay the interest on the money required to build railways to open up our mining districts and to develop our agricultural areas. While this assistance has been given to the Timber Combine, no attempt is made to give any assistance to the people on the goldfields. The Premier, from his visits to the Murchison, knows the disadvantages under which the mines labour there owing to want of mining timber and firewood. I consider that while we give concessions to the Timber Combine to take timber from our country and sell it cheaply to foreign countries, it would be well if we reduced the freights on firewood to the goldfields. I speak more particularly of

the Murchison. Then, instead of having an outcry for a firewood railway, in all probability they would be satisfied to do without it so long as they could get firewood and mining timber at a much cheaper railway rate than at present. I consider that this should have been done by the Premier when he reduced the freights.

THE PREMIER: Do not they have some zone on that railway?

MR. HOLMAN: No. The same rate exists for the whole of the State.

THE PREMIER: How much per ton per mile?

MR. HOLMAN: I think it is about 1d. I do not know the exact figures. On the Murchison, where there is no available mining timber within 60 or 80 miles, a special rate should be struck. It could easily be done. It would save the country some thousands of pounds in the construction of a firewood line. Near Mullewa, some 120 miles from Cue, there are splendid forests; and if the Government were to reduce the charge for firewood and mining timber to a low rate it would pay the Government to run special trains on that railway to supply the whole of the Murchison with timber for a number of years. That policy could be tried for a year or two to see if it was a success. If not, it would be time to consider the advisability of constructing a firewood line. But something should be done in the near future, to assist the mining companies on the Murchison to get a firewood supply. It is well known that the Murchison for firewood and mining timber purposes is absolutely cut out, and that there is hardly a stick can be got to keep the ground from coming together. Even now they must get the timber from Three Springs on the Midland Railway. Something must be done in the near future, or our industry is going to suffer far worse than it has in the past. Everyone must admit that the outlook as regards gold-mining in Western Australia is not so promising now as it was a few years ago, and we should take every possible means to see that the industry receives every encouragement; because if that industry goes down every other industry in the State must be retarded.

At 6.30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.



At 7-30, Chair resumed.

Mr. HOLMAN (continuing): I was speaking in regard to what should be done to encourage the mineral resources of the State. In connection with encouraging capital to come to Western Australia, it has been said the Labour party prevented capital coming here. I maintain that certain things have taken place in connection with the mining industry that will be very detrimental to the mining industry. I am speaking of what has taken place at Phillips River. A little while ago a big outcry was made in reference to Mr. Kaufman floating a company for a large amount, and some very questionable means were adopted by Mr. Kaufman when he went to London to do so, by stating in a report what the Government of Western Australia intended to do for his company. He stated that the Government had promised him a railway to a certain place, and also that he had acquired the right to the mineral on some hundreds of acres of ground. I want to point out what a great deal of harm such a report might do to the mining industry of Western Australia. In the first place his report was untruthful and misleading to the investing public in the old country. What has been the result? Owing to the promises in the report, the market value of the company has risen six or seven times. Mr. Kaufman spent £68,000 or £70,000 in mining at Phillips River, while we find the market value of the company, according to the latest report, is something like £1,000,000. The company has been boomed by an alleged promise which it is said the Government made. We know these promises were not made by the Government; but I would like to have had some stronger steps taken to stop the spreading of false reports. Mr. Kaufman undoubtedly boomed his company by circulating falsehoods in the old country.

Mr. GILL: Is there anything uncommon in that?

Mr. HOLMAN: Nothing; but it is to our disadvantage. If the Government allow a person like Mr. Kaufman or anyone else to make a statement and throw the responsibility on the Government, then if the company turns out an absolute failure the Government will have to

take the responsibility on their shoulders. This puts me in mind of a certain tour taken by Sir Gerard Smith, then Governor of this State, and Mr. Darlington Simpson, to Peak Hill. These gentlemen travelled the country in coaches drawn by eight horses, with footmen and policemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: I cannot see what this has to do with the Budget.

Mr. HOLMAN: I want to point out the attitude that should be adopted to encourage people to invest in our mines, and if our mining industry goes down our Budget will suffer. When that tour was taken every effort was made to boom the mining property at Peak Hill, and the Governor was used as a means to an end by Mr. Darlington Simpson. Shares in the Peak Hill property increased in value at that time to £10 or £11; at the present time they are not worth 10d. Of course the shareholders suffered. I have never been to Phillips River, but I believe if care is not taken by the Government, the investors in the Phillips River country will be led into a similar trap that the people who invested in the Peak Hill and Horseshoe companies were led into some time ago. The country will suffer. It has been stated on more than one occasion that it is the intention of the Government to reduce the grants to roads boards and municipalities. I see no reason why the grants should not be reduced to municipalities that have been established for a long time; but the position is different in regard to outback municipalities on the goldfields that have just started and have all their work before them. It is a mistake for the Government to place the outback municipalities on the same footing as municipalities in the city and towns.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are not on the same footing.

Mr. HOLMAN: Practically; the only difference is that when the municipalities in the towns were established they received a subsidy of pound for pound and large grants as well. Now when the outback municipalities are endeavouring to build up their centres, the subsidy is cut down and they get no grants at all. The roads boards in outback places are in a far worse position.

THE PREMIER: How is Perth on a better footing than an outback place? The municipalities are graded.

**MR. HOLMAN :** Because these municipalities were established and built up when they received large subsidies and grants. The outback municipalities at the present time receive no grants at all, and the subsidies have been greatly cut down.

**THE PREMIER :** They have been getting 25s. in the pound against 10s. that the Perth municipality receives.

**MR. HOLMAN :** There is an item of £40,000 which was given to the Perth municipality, or obtained by some means from the Government, of which no record was kept at all.

**THE TREASURER :** What about public buildings?

**MR. HOLMAN :** They do not pay rates. The municipalities receive the benefit of the population which is centred around the public buildings. In connection with roads boards that is a graver question, because in some of the outback places the roads boards have no money with which to maintain the roads. I will quote my own electorate as an instance, because it is beyond doubt that a member is better acquainted with his own district than any other, although there are scores of roads boards in other outback electorates which are in the same position. I will take the Nannine roads board. That body has kept the road from Nannine to Wiluna, a distance of 150 or 160 miles, with only one solitary camping place along the track, in a state of repair.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS :** They struck no rate during 1905.

**MR. HOLMAN :** There was no population : how was it possible for them to strike a rate ? Almost all the people live in camps and on mining leases and do not use the road. How is it possible for the Nannine roads board to keep the road to Wiluna in order when they do not receive any rates ? Take the Collie roads board. The people there do not live in tents, and they received last year £1,250 from Government, but they only found £160 themselves. Outside of this, thousands of pounds have been spent in this and other districts. Take the Premier's electorate. The Bunbury roads board received £850 last year.

**THE PREMIER :** It is not in my electorate.

**MR. HOLMAN :** It is in the Bunbury district. That roads board received £850 and subscribed £44 19s. 11d. Then there is the Bunbury suburban roads board : that body received £705 and subscribed about £80. When we consider these places which are already settled and which should be in a position to tax themselves, but which provide but a very small amount of money towards the upkeep of roads, then it is unfair to expect outback places to tax themselves to any extent. I urge on the Government to take into consideration the disabilities of the people in the outback country, and treat the people with some degree of fairness which they are entitled to. In the outback country, where we possibly can we should make good roads and cheapen the cost of transit for people living hundreds of miles from a railway. The disabilities the people labour under are quite sufficient without having to make roads for themselves. It is impossible for them to do it, therefore we should do all we possibly can to assist them. As far as the Estimates are concerned, the outback country roads throughout the whole of the State have not been fairly treated. We find thousands of pounds are given towards making roads to the Caves and the beauty spots of the State. That is all very well in its place, but until we can make provision to give the outback people what they require in the way of roads to open up the country we should not spend money on pleasure resorts. I would like to have heard a little more explanation from the Minister for Works as to the reason why this great change of policy of constructing works out of loan instead of revenue has been adopted. I do not intend to quote the figures. We look at the last page and we find a system brought forward by the Government. In this vote alone the Estimates show nearly £63,000 better than they would have shown if we had been given a fair record of the Estimates for the forthcoming year. I do not intend to delay the Committee any longer now, but I mean to criticise to the fullest extent every item on the Estimates which I consider should be criticised. The only grants I asked for in relation to my district were for the making of a road and for the sinking of two or three wells for the people out in that back country, and not one item has

been given to the people of my district. If the people I represent have to suffer for the want of roads and for the want of wells along roads which they have made themselves, other districts can very well battle along without having splendidly improved roads to travel on. In connection with the mining industry in the far-back districts, something will have to be done in the near future. The policy of the past has not been of the best, and we should take the very first opportunity of opening up the back country by railways, and of supplying fuel and mining timber, whilst we should do all that we can to open up new agricultural areas so that people in the back country will be supplied with agricultural products grown in our own State, which will make for the prosperity both of the mining population and the agriculturists as well.

MR. A. C. GULL (Swan): I listened with deep interest to the Budget Speech of the Treasurer, and I must say that taking into consideration the year he has before him he appears to me to have fulfilled his task with very great credit to himself and with as safe a proposition as he could put before the country. The Treasurer has been accused of optimism. I think that his optimism in the next year will be very seriously taxed, and therefore he was fulfilling his duty in framing his Estimates as carefully as possible with a view to keeping down his expenditure to the lowest possible degree. In connection with the revenue he is likely to receive he has been forced to face very serious loss from diminution in the returns from the Commonwealth. Also to be considered is the lack of enterprise, lack of investment, which has characterised the past year, and which it seems to me will characterise the year to come. We have lost the great revenue we used to handle, and we must put up with the consequences. We have been told that the money not raised by the customs has gone into the pockets of the people of the country, and that consequently they are in a better position to carry additional taxation. I think members will realise generally that the living expenses in this Western State are no better to-day than they were five or six years ago; in fact I believe that in many instances they are a bit worse. Very little notice need be

taken of the attitude on the Opposition side of the House in regard to their plea for expenditure on the one hand and economy on the other. It seems to me that this has become a sort of orthodox religion. I cannot speak from my own experience, but from following the debates which have taken place in this House for many years I have always found that no matter what party was in power the other fellow urged that it was always doing wrong, a general cry was always thrown out that the Estimates were extravagantly formed, and at the same time everybody growled at the Government for not spending money. The whole thing amounts to this, that the Government are not in a position to spend what they do not possess. Every Opposition, for years I have known of it, has always growled at the Government for lavish expenditure on the one hand, whilst on the other it has condemned them for economies they have made.

MR. TAYLOR: The economies are in the wrong way.

MEMBER: He has a lot in the Swan.

MR. GULL: I have nothing.

MR. SCADDAN: I will show you later on what you have.

MR. GULL: No sooner does an Opposition get into power than it realises the responsibilities of office. The member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), who was so keen in his strictures on the Ministry the other night, and who urged in regard to land tax proposals that the present Government snared them or stole them from the Opposition, failed lamentably when he was in power to bring in that tax which he to-day says is a religion of his own. In connection with the land tax, a great deal has been said with regard to that policy. It has been alleged that Mr. Rason came into power entirely opposed to land taxation. I know from my own positive knowledge that was not a fact.

MR. JOHNSON: Was he in favour of land values taxation?

MR. TAYLOR: Let him go.

MR. GULL: I was going up for election at the same time. I was a beginner at this business, and I naturally gave very close attention to the remarks that fell from the head of the Government when he was making his policy

speech; and I most emphatically say that Mr. Rason stated that he did not intend during that session to place any farther burdens of taxation upon the people, but that he realised that in the near future fresh taxation would be necessary, and that it would necessarily fall on the lands.

MR. JOHNSON: Did he advocate land values taxation or a tax on unimproved values?

MR. SCADDAN: Here is what the Minister for Mines said.

MR. GULL: I do not care what the Minister for Mines said. A question has been raised as to the policy speech of the late Premier, and I am in a position to state emphatically that those were his views on that question. I sympathise with the Treasurer in having to introduce a pestilent tax like the land tax; absolutely a pestilent tax. I also sympathise with the Premier, because I am satisfied in my own mind that under normal conditions of affairs such as existed during the last four or five years the question of land taxation would never have entered the Premier's head or that of any member of the Ministry. Another place made various amendments, which I may say are amendments I supported before they went to the other House. As I said before, a land tax is a pestilent tax, but a tax which, if it is to be applied, should be applied to every member of the community, and I trust that these suggestions from another place will be adopted.

MR. TROY: We will help you.

MR. UNDERWOOD: We will do our best.

MR. GULL: The member for Subiaco the other night levelled a charge against the present Government for not bringing down the Loan Bill. Certainly every member in this House would be glad to know exactly what the position is to be, exactly how much or how little the Government are going to bring down. From my own point of view I hope it will be a thumping big Loan Bill, a good solid Bill. As regards the loss of time, there has been a most shocking waste of time during the past two years, and although we have been sitting many weeks I am game to say I am blaming one or two members on the Opposition side for having been answerable for a week of it. (Interjections.) I

am answering the remarks of the member for Subiaco. I always notice that I get more interjections than most people, whether interesting or not.

MR. TAYLOR: You look so pleased.

MR. GULL: I do not mind. Then we had the strictures of the member for Kanowna, strictures in relation to which one questions sometimes whether they are tragedy or comedy. I think the subject of the roads board vote one of the most vital questions regarding the policy of the Government. I am glad to notice that the Minister for Works realises more to-day than he did when he first took office the responsibility of handling these works, and while I am in accord with him that in many instances boards have been given subsidies they certainly were not entitled to, still on the other hand he must, and I am sure he will, be careful in dealing with boards which have been newly created, and which need a very large expenditure necessary to open roads up. I cannot help thinking that some system of classification of these boards is necessary; also a classification with regard to their roads. If these boards were divided into first, second, and third class boards, and a maximum and minimum given them in each instance, the result would be satisfactory both to the Minister and to the boards. There is one other point with regard to these boards. If we are, as I take it is to be the case, to go on developing this country by a policy of railway extension and land settlement, we realise that this should have been done out of revenue if possible, if the revenue had been available. It is generally considered now that this is a legitimate charge on loan funds; and if it is legitimate to charge to loan railways for the development of agricultural lands, then I question seriously whether it is not legitimate to draw upon loan for opening up roads to feed those railways.

MR. TAYLOR: You do not collect a toll on the roads as you do on the railways.

MR. GULL: The roads enable produce to be brought to the railways, and induce people to go out and take up land which would otherwise be idle. As to the remarks of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) about the assistance lately given to the Combine, I do not altogether agree that the assistance is given to the

Combine wholly and solely, but rather that it is given with a view to assisting to settle a vexed question which was tending to bring about serious trouble amongst the workers and the timber-millers. But as regards the Combine itself, I regret to say I fully believe the Combine is a bad institution for Western Australia. It is an octopus that is stretching out its tentacles in every direction. It is trying to monopolise every line and side-line in the timber business. It has recently launched into the firewood trade in the Swan district—[LABOUR MEMBERS: Oh, oh!]  
—not only in the Swan district, but in others, though of the Swan district I speak with personal knowledge. The Combine is undercutting the men, and driving all the small men out; but as soon as the opposition is frozen out, there is not the slightest doubt that prices will immediately be raised once more. Moreover, for many years it has been the custom of the Government to issue cutters' licenses for firewood, charcoal-burning, and so forth; and it has always been held that the licensees were entitled to cut over the Combine's concessions on the Canning; and the Combine has never until recently attempted to block such cutting. The head of the Forestry Department has informed me he still holds that the licensees are entitled to cut on the Combine's land; but lately these men have been summoned, and the cases against them dismissed. An appeal is now pending to the Supreme Court; and clearly the men are not in a position to defend an appeal by such a body as the Combine. If, as I believe, the men are within their rights, I think it is obligatory on the Government to see that they are protected; to see at all events that this question is settled and not allowed to remain open; for the result will undoubtedly be inimical to the men if some action is not taken to support them, as they cannot afford to fight out the quarrel. Just one word or two more on the subject of Federation, which was introduced in this debate by the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish); and I do not intend to dwell on it at any length, though it is very near to me, and especially important in my estimation, because I shall later on have an opportunity of dealing with it at greater length. I am pleased indeed to find that both the

Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) have returned from their trip to Melbourne much disillusionised, realising that at all events from the heads of the Eastern States Governments they have received very little sympathy and assistance in working out the problems now pressing on our attention. I am pleased indeed that Sir John Forrest has, by his speech at Newcastle, drawn the Easterners into giving a solid expression of their opinions.

MR. TROY: And they have bit back, too.

MR. GULL: I do not care whether they have bit back. Sir John Forrest is quite capable of taking care of himself, and I am not here to defend him; but I am glad that his action has at all events made those people show their hands.

MR. EWING: South Australians, for instance.

MR. GULL: Yes. I shall quote the remarks of the Premier of South Australia:—

He would say this to Sir John Forrest: that so long as he (Mr. Price) was in power, Sir John would never get the Kalgoorlie line constructed until he agreed to make the line from Pine Creek to Oodnadatta.

At last we have a straight-out opinion from South Australia. For years past it has been a question of shilly-shally with that State. We could not get from its politicians an expression of their real feeling in the matter of the railway; and I am pleased that Sir John Forrest's remarks have drawn forth such a reply. I hold no brief for Sir John Forrest. To many of his actions in respect of Federation I strongly object.

MR. A. J. WILSON: I remember your dealing trenchantly with him on one occasion.

MEMBER: When he was in Melbourne.

MR. GULL: I will deal just as trenchantly with him here as I dealt when he was absent; but we shall have another opportunity of discussing this matter, and I do not intend any longer to delay the Committee. When that question comes up, as come up it will, I shall have something more to say.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I do not propose to recapitulate the various facts and figures brought before the Committee by the Treasurer in a very

clear and lucid Budget Speech. I regret I was unable to be present during its delivery, but I understand it was an effort worthy of the occasion and worthy of the man. The charge made by several Opposition speakers against the present Government has been largely based on the allegation of a certain degree of laxity in our administration. When the Rason Government took office, I may say at the request of the gentlemen opposite. Ministers set out as far as possible to live within their means.

MR. TAYLOR: And made a very poor fist of it.

THE PREMIER: I think I shall be able to prove to the hon. member that they achieved their object. Our predecessors in office (Labour Government), notwithstanding that they started the year with a credit balance of £83,364, finished with a deficit of £46,000, having spent £129,000 more than they received, although they received £1,028,000 from the Commonwealth revenue as against £873,000 received last year. In addition to that, they had a considerably smaller amount to find by way of interest, the interest bill for that year being some £57,103 less than for the present year. The deficit when the Rason Government took office had increased to £108,000; the deficit at the end of the year was £119,900, the expenditure having exceeded the revenue during the 10 months the Rason Government were in office by about £11,000. So as a matter of fact the Rason Government spent practically £1,000 per month more than they received, as against the £10,000 per month which the preceding Government expended in excess of what they received.

MR. WALKER: The Rason Government saved by stopping public works.

THE PREMIER: Not by stopping public works, but by careful and economical administration, and close supervision of the spending departments. I can give you some instances of that economy. I am not talking without my book. The Leader of the Opposition did not consider it sufficient to adjust our expenditure with a view to keeping within our revenue, but was apparently anxious to wipe out the deficit at one fell swoop. I maintain it would be a false move to endeavour to wipe out in one act a deficit which has been accumulating for practically five

years. That would have meant either retrenchment of a most violent kind, or increased taxation. We have recognised the necessity of introducing increased taxation. In 1898 the deficit was something like £502,000, as stated by the member for West Perth (Mr. Illingworth) in his address the other evening. The present Government did not wish to exhaust all avenues of taxation; and the form of taxation which commended itself to Ministers was a tax on unimproved land values. I do not propose to state again how many members of the Government supported this tax, but it is a tax which I have supported ever since I first entered this House, and one on which I was elected, and one which was proposed by the James Government at the general elections some two years ago. In any case, if the deficit is still in existence at the end of the current year, and if those members who are so much enamoured of an income tax are willing to contribute to the Treasury through that channel, I presume that at the end of the term the Treasurer and the Government will not have any objection to collecting an income tax. One of our reductions has been in municipal subsidies, which have been reduced by 20 per cent.; but I should like to point out to the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) that in these subsidy reductions provision is made whereby municipalities in the earlier stages of their history receive double the sums granted to older municipalities, while we provide that the various municipalities shall be graded; and whereas the average municipality, such as Albany, Northam, Bunbury and Geraldton, has been receiving 25s. for every pound raised by rating, it will, after this reduction, actually receive pound for pound, provided it is prepared to tax itself at the rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound, the maximum provided under the existing Municipalities Act. Our main object was to economise in our State expenditure so as to provide for the State to live within its means. In support of that contention I will endeavour to quote a few facts which are apparent in the present Estimates, if members are prepared to study them. In the Lands Department, without going into details which I shall have an opportunity of doing at a later period, notwithstanding

the extraordinary expenditure incurred during the last year by the classification of lands, by survey before selection and other expenditure which as a rule does not crop up in the financial year, we have spent £12,180 less than was voted, and £17,545 less than the previous year; while I hope to be able to carry out the work of the department this year for £1,280 less than the cost of the past financial year. Although the revenue of the department has gone up from £177,309 in 1904-5 to an estimated revenue of at least £225,150, the expenditure in 1904-5 was £136,123 with a revenue of £177,309, against at the present time an expenditure of £118,578 with a revenue of £225,150. I am hopeful that the land revenue, notwithstanding that the member for West Perth considers the Treasurer's estimate rather optimistic, will be considerably in excess of that which was stated by the Treasurer. In fact the recent return we had of the sale at Sandstone was a matter which had not entered into our calculations. The 83 blocks at Sandstone brought something over £14,000, and of this amount 10 per cent. is paid by way of deposit and the balance in four equal quarterly instalments, so that there will be about £8,000 received from that locality alone during the financial year. I propose to effect certain economies in connection with this department, but as members are aware, under the Public Service Act it is very difficult indeed to effect economies. In some instances, where the Minister may find he is able to do without the services of some officers, it costs as much for the superannuation allowance, or rather it costs as much to get rid of a man as to keep him on.

MR. TROY: The Public Service Commissioner advocated your getting rid of your clerk.

THE PREMIER: I objected to that, and I do not propose to get rid of that officer. I think the Minister's clerk is an official that any one with the experience of a Minister, especially Minister for Lands, must recognise is absolutely essential. The Minister for Lands must have a man capable of dealing with the various land questions, otherwise it would mean that the Minister would not be able to get out of his office at all, with the volume of work

in the department at present. [MR. SCADDAN: He is a good officer.] One of the best in the department. I hope later on that he will have an opportunity of taking a higher position. I was never an advocate of the Public Service Act, but I am prepared to give it a trial for a year or two; though under that Act the Minister has not the power he should have. The Minister cannot recognise the merits of any officer, nor can he get rid of the drones. That is the difficulty under the Act. The only opportunity the Minister has to retrench is to wait until officers leave or die, and then he can transfer other officers instead of making new appointments. That is my experience in the few months I have had of Ministerial office, as the only way in which economies can be effected. We have effected one slight economy, and that is in regard to the position of clerk to the Executive Council. We have found that it is possible to do without the services of that officer, and to utilise the services of the assistant clerk of the Legislative Council. We find that by this means we are able to save £450.

MR. SCADDAN: More pitchforking. Apparently the officer was pitchforked into the position he now occupies.

THE PREMIER: It is practically an office in the gift of the President of the Legislative Council, but the Government have utilised the services of the clerk and saved £450, though we have to provide for the superannuation allowance of the official who recently occupied the position of clerk to the Executive Council. Another form in which we propose to reduce expenditure to a considerable extent, to the extent of at least £600 a year, is in regard to the telephone service. We found after inquiry that there were many officers in the Public Service who not only had telephones to their rooms, but had private telephones for which the Government have been paying for the last few years. I made it my duty to send a circular to each Minister, asking him to institute inquiries as to how many of these public service officials had private telephones, and to see whether it would be possible by a system of telephonettes to considerably reduce the expenditure in regard to telephones alone; and I find, after going into the matter very carefully, that we can reduce

expenditure in that direction alone by something over £600 per annum. These are matters which take a considerable time to arrive at, and it is only after careful inquiry that one is able to judge that these are economies that can be effected. I can only say that the Government have endeavoured, and will endeavour, to exercise economy in administration wherever it is consistent with efficiency.

MR. SCADDAN: You want to go into the question of gold passes.

THE PREMIER: That really is economy, but still it is only out of one pocket into another. In the case of telephones we have to pay for the service to the Commonwealth Government. I recognise that the matter of railway passes is one well worthy of being inquired into, and that it is questionable whether the privileges extended by these very passes are not on some occasions abused. In the Colonial Secretary's Department we propose to go in for an amalgamation of the Health and Medical Departments to save something like £2,000 a year, without impairing the efficiency of the departments.

MR. TROY: You stultify the factories work, because the factories inspector cannot carry out the work.

THE PREMIER: Why not? Because he has too much to do?

MR. TROY: Yes.

THE PREMIER: I am informed that the efficiency of the department will not be affected. In the two principal departments, the medical and health, the officials at the head of the departments recognise that a saving can be effected by an amalgamation.

MR. WALKER: But not with the same efficiency.

THE PREMIER: That is a matter of opinion.

MR. WALKER: Not with the head of the department you will now have.

THE PREMIER: The position is that we have two officers of departments who recognise that amalgamation can be effected without impairing efficiency. The question then is, which of the two officers is to take precedence, all things being equal. The President of the Central Board of Health has all his experts under him, and he is an administrator more than an expert.

MR. WALKER: You will have the wrong man to administer the department.

THE PREMIER: That is where I differ from the hon. member. The Chief Medical Officer will make an efficient and economical administrator. If he had been retired, in any case it would have entailed a superannuation allowance of something under £600 per annum, as against the nominal sum which the other gentleman will receive if he is not prepared to accept the proposal made to him by the Colonial Secretary to carry on the position of district medical officer and coroner.

MR. H. BROWN: Why not abandon the Central Board of Health? A big saving is possible there.

THE PREMIER: Ministers when dealing with the different departments will have an opportunity of giving the Committee the fullest details in connection with the various departments they have under their control. I can only say that hardly a week goes by without the Government applying the pruning knife in one direction or another. During the debate the Treasurer was twitted with his connection with day labour and contract. The Government have done a considerable amount of work departmentally, and they have done the work considerably under the price at which it was tendered for. If the Government have done nothing else they have initiated a policy of economic railway construction, which they can very well be proud of.

MR. SCADDAN: You have not initiated it.

THE PREMIER: We have initiated it so far as Western Australia is concerned. When I made my speech in connection with the three Railway Bills which were introduced last year, I was laughed at for the figures I quoted.

MR. TAYLOR: You were supported by the Opposition.

THE PREMIER: I was supported by some members, but other members ridiculed the idea and said it would not be possible to build these railways at under £1,400 a mile. The member for Mount Margaret, if I recollect, said it was all very well for me to quote these figures, but they would not be borne out by some other Minister who spoke. However I said:—

I have had a little experience in regard to these railway lines, both in surveying and in



regard to construction, and I will give my outside estimate for these items. I am going to give figures so that members, if they desire to criticise me, will know where I have made a mistake in arriving at an estimate in connection with the construction of these lines. The details would be as follow :—Surveying, £10 per mile; clearing, £10; forming, £100; sleepers, that is laying with jarrah sleepers, £200; rails and fastenings, 45lb. rails, £630—members will know that quite recently there has been a jump in the price of rails, and that is allowing for the higher cost (£630); bridges, culverts, £100; plate-laying, £50; total, £1,100 per mile.

I said that the 70 odd miles of railway would be built for under £80,000, and that has been proved to be correct. On Saturday last I had the opportunity of running over the first of these railway lines to be constructed and completed, and it is a credit not only to the engineers but also to the supervisors who were responsible for those railways. And we find that after this work has been completed the whole work has been done for something like £20 per mile under the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. HOLMAN: And pretty good work.

THE PREMIER: Very good work; but let me tell members that the position is that we took the place of the contractor, and the State got the benefit of the amount that was saved. The whole of the work was sublet to contractors—the whole of the forming at from 7s. to 10s. per chain, and even at that price none of the men engaged on the work made less than 8s. a day, and some of them made as high as 15s. a day. Members will recognise that as far as the Treasurer is concerned, he need not be afraid of being associated with work of such a character, which has been carried out so economically.

MR. COLLIER: But he does not believe in the system, all the same.

THE PREMIER: What is the system? We sublet, instead of the contractor. It is contract work, but the State is the contractor and the State sublets instead of the contractor. The whole thing is contract work; but instead of being let in one big contract, the Government let a number of small contracts and get the profit that the contractor otherwise would make. If the Labour Government had carried out these works on the same lines we would have had a larger number of miles of railway constructed at a less

capital cost than we have at the present time.

MR. TAYLOR: We did not bring down the Bills to construct the lines, remember.

THE PREMIER: You did not bring down any Bills to construct anything at all. No work was initiated by your Government.

MR. TAYLOR: We carried out the work successfully.

THE PREMIER: I am glad to see the members so enthusiastic about bringing down a bold, vigorous public works policy, because they will have an opportunity of supporting a bold, vigorous public works policy next week. Members need not be alarmed. The Loan Authorisation Bill which will be submitted on Tuesday next will be comprehensive as far as the works contained in the schedule are concerned, and it will be an evidence of the confidence the Government have in the future of the State, realising that a bold policy of departmental expenditure is essential at the present time. We have to choose at the present time between stagnation and development, and everyone who has the best interests of Western Australia at heart must line themselves on the side of that policy which has for its object the opening up of our great resources and great industries. The member for Mt. Magnet said that no progressive public works policy was initiated by the Government or their predecessors. I would like to inform members that three lines of railway were brought down in the face of considerable opposition last session. No time has been lost in giving effect to the wishes of the country in regard to the construction of those lines.

MR. HOLMAN: I said the country did not want the lines.

THE PREMIER: I do not know if they did not want them, but they are looking for a good deal of the same nature. Every member on the Opposition side was in favour of the particular line that received the most criticism—the Katanning-Kojonup line. They were prepared to accept one line, and that one line was the Katanning-Kojonup Railway.

MR. SCADDAN: Absolutely inaccurate.

THE PREMIER: I am surprised that the member should make such a statement.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I must insist that members shall not interject.

**MR. TAYLOR:** We cannot swallow that though.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Members will have an opportunity of replying.

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member wanted us to delay the Bills for another session. What sort of cry would members have had against the Government if we had not dealt with the Bills? The survey of some of the lines was commenced in February last, and one line is absolutely completed—the Goomalling-Dowerin line—and the remaining lines will be completed before Christmas, so that the whole work has been carried out within 12 months of the authorisation by Parliament—a very good record, and one which the Government are proud of. The member for Subiaco complained at the considerable delay in bringing down the Loan Bill. It was rather rich as far as that member was concerned, considering that the only Loan Bill he brought down came before the House on the day prior to the prorogation of Parliament; so I do not think he has much to complain of so long as we bring the Bill down within the next month.

**MR. A. J. WILSON:** That does not justify you in following his example.

**THE PREMIER:** It does not justify the member criticising the Government on that. I believe the Government of which Mr. Gardiner was Treasurer brought down the Loan Bill the day on which Parliament prorogued. The member for Katanning referred to the fact that the grants to roads boards were being reduced. I would like to draw the member's attention to the fact that if we are spending large sums of money in building railways it necessarily follows that we cannot spend as much on the various roads in these districts.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** The railways are no use without the roads.

**THE PREMIER:** Let me finish. It means that the roads boards are relieved of the maintenance of those roads which are running parallel to the railway. Take the Katanning-Kojonup line.

**MR. WALKER:** What about the roads in my district?

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member has a railway running right alongside the

road. Take the Katanning and Kojonup roads boards, those bodies will not have to spend as much money in support of their main roads as they have done up to the present time, and the revenue can be expended in opening up other avenues in providing feeders to the railway. If you have the railways you cannot have the roads.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** I cannot agree with you on that.

**THE PREMIER:** The hon. member has got his railway now. In regard to the criticism indulged in as to the reduction of timber freights, the member for Subiaco stated that he would be interested to know whether the reduction recently made in the timber freights would mean that the timber would have to be carried over the railways under cost price. The cost of running at the present time is 5s. 6d. per train mile, and that will mean 50 per cent. profit on running the timber on the basis which we have reduced the freights to, while the reduction in wharfage is really a royalty. That is all it practically amounted to. The Commissioner received 2s. 6d. for taking a load of timber one mile over the railways, and he could practically run it for about 2d. a load. We reduced the wharfage 1s. 3d. In Queensland there is absolutely no wharfage charge made. The Government were perfectly justified in making the reduction, more especially in view of the fact that the select committee which was appointed by the House were unanimous in their idea that a reduction should be made on the freights for timber. The Government appointed a special board to inquire into the question of giving additional facilities to sawmills, and as to the advisability of reducing the freights, and as a result, the board recommended that the Government should be asked to reduce the wharfage, and at the same time to reduce the freights which were being received at that time on the export of timber. In addition a motion was carried in the House. Although it generally dealt with the question of freights in regard to all kinds of produce, the discussion resolved itself eventually into the advisability of reducing the freights on timber or otherwise. That question was debated at length by members on both sides of the House, and the motion

was carried without a division, to the effect that it was desirable some relief should be given to our various industries.

**MR. SCADDAN :** The Government did not give relief to the people in the State who used the timber.

**THE PREMIER :** Before the reduction was made, a ring controlled the timber market, and of its own accord it brought the price of timber down 10s. Would the Government, in the face of that, have been justified in making any reduction? I think the Government would have been foolish in the extreme to make any reduction. We were endeavouring to build up as far as possible an export trade, and the difference which existed a few weeks ago if it had been continued for a month would have meant that the amount which the Government gave as a rebate in timber would have been eaten up by the loss which the railways would have entailed by the fact of the mills closing down. In addition to that it meant something like £2,000 a day going out of circulation, and something like 2,000 men being kept out of employment. The Government were justified, in view of the fact that they were supported on all hands, by a motion of the House, and by the request of the representatives of the boards and the different bodies throughout the State, asking that some relief should be given, and this was not restricted to the Combine. There are other mills in addition to the Combine which are affected by the reduction, although the Combine is affected by between 60 and 70 per cent. of the reduction. There are Ellerton Brown's mill and the Kirrup mill that will receive a considerable amount of relief.

**MR. WALKER :** That is dead against your own opinion when you were on that commission.

**THE PREMIER :** What is?

**MR. WALKER :** The statement you make now encouraging the export trade.

**THE PREMIER :** I encourage the export trade at present for the reason that if there were some other avenue in which the men could be employed, I would not let the timber go at the same price.

**MR. WALKER :** Take over your own timber forests, then.

**THE PREMIER :** What difference would that make if you have not the market?

**MR. WALKER :** Start other public works.

**THE PREMIER :** It is the market we have to look to. Other Governments are sending ambassadors throughout the Eastern countries to do all they can to encourage trade, and I maintain we acted wisely in making the reduction we did, although I say the timber at the present time is being sold too cheaply. I only wish we were able to have other avenues of employment for the men. If so we would not go out of our way to encourage the timber being sold at the present price.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE :** It is because we have to come into competition with the world.

**THE PREMIER :** Yes. Our karri forests have not been touched up to the present. We have these in reserve, and the timber will be used in a few years time. People are beginning to know the value of karri. Shipments have been sent home, and trucks and waggons and railway stock generally have been built by various companies in the old country; and it has been shown that the karri is an excellent timber for this purpose. The karri will assuredly take its place in the future. It is one of the best timbers for railway rolling-stock construction; but it requires a considerable time before we can get a product of that kind on the market. [MR. GULL interjected.] As far as the Combine are concerned, they do not hold any karri forests at all.

**MR. GULL :** They have karri forests at Albany.

**THE PREMIER :** They have practically no karri at all. The Albany mills are closed. The Combine have a small area, only 14 or 15 miles outside Karri-dale towards Busselton. The question that the Leader of the Opposition raised as to Ministers buying support by giving grants to roads boards is unworthy of him and the position he occupies. I hardly think we should treat a statement of that kind seriously.

**MR. HEITMANN :** It is still true.

**THE PREMIER :** Some members are very brave inside the House. They make statements which they would be

ashamed to make when outside this Chamber.

MR. HEITMANN: Look at the Estimates year after year.

MR. WALKER: Look what the Fremantle roads are getting.

THE PREMIER: I suppose they will get about the same as the Kanowna roads board will get.

MR. WALKER: No.

THE PREMIER: They have sandy tracks to build over, while at Kanowna there are clay roads. Whatever the faults of the Government may be, we are determined to administer the affairs of the country with clean hands.

MR. HOLMAN: And smiling faces.

THE PREMIER: A lot has been said in regard to the tax on unimproved land values. I do not propose to go into the question of who was the absolute originator of this tax. I would, however, like to compliment the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), although he is not present to-night, on the careful attempt he made to analyse the Estimates with a view to pointing out the sins of the present Administration and the virtues of his preceding Administration.

MR. TROY: He did not leave you a leg to stand on.

THE PREMIER: I did not have the pleasure of hearing the hon. member's remarks, but I carefully perused the newspapers, and I did not see there any statements which require replying to. The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) also bitterly attacked the Government on the fact that they did not bring down the Loan Bill before Mr. James left London. How the question of Mr. James's leaving London is going to affect the money market I do not know. As he left London at a time when the discount rate was at something like 6 per cent., I do not think it would have been an opportune time to bring down a loan; and the present Agent General, with his advisers, is quite able to place the matter on the market, if the Government decide to go on with this loan. In conclusion I should like to congratulate the Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition on the gallant fight they made against such big odds in the Eastern States at the recent conference. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The points raised by both those gentlemen should have had the effect of letting

the people of the Eastern States know exactly how Western Australian stands in this connection. The reasons they had for objecting to the resolutions adopted by the conference will be published as an addendum to the report recently issued; and these have already been forwarded to Melbourne. I can only, in conclusion, state that Ministers are not sparing themselves in their endeavours to secure economy with efficiency, and their efforts in this direction I feel sure will be appreciated by a majority of members on both sides of the House.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): I do not propose to deal with the Estimates at any length this evening, because I will have an opportunity of dealing with each item. And my desire to deal with each item is largely due to the way in which the Estimates have been brought down. I find on careful perusal of the Works vote for roads and bridges that the Government have very carefully indeed devoted whatever money is available to be expended from the revenue of this State in that particular to those constituencies represented by Government supporters. I want to challenge the Government to show to me any items on those estimates for the constituencies represented by the Opposition. I want to say here that those estimates are the greatest exhibition of placation I have ever seen since I have been in Parliament.

MR. WALKER: Works promised the Opposition side omitted.

MR. TAYLOR: Ministers of the Crown have travelled through my electorate during the recess and have been good enough to promise to the mayors and councillors at civic receptions to place on the Estimates votes for their municipalities, in some instances amounting to £200; but I have failed to find them here. I have been written to by the town clerks of those towns, asking me to support those items when they reach this House on the Estimates, having been promised by Ministers, but they are not here. As I have said before, I have no desire to deal with the Estimates at any length to-night. I shall have ample opportunity in that particular during the Committee stage on the Estimates. But I cannot help making a few remarks with reference to

the revenue of £60,000 contemplated to be received from the land tax. I have listened patiently to hon. members; and I believe, to be fair to hon. gentlemen who grace the Treasury benches, there are about two, there may be three, but I believe there are two, who believe in a land tax. But I have yet to learn that they believe in taxation on unimproved land values. I have read the speeches of Government supporters during their campaigns. A few of them pointed out to their electors that they were in favour of a land tax.

MR. SCADDAN: The Minister for Mines himself was one.

MR. TAYLOR: The Minister for Mines referred to the subject; also the members for Balkatta, West Perth, Guildford (Mr. Rason when he was a member), and Collie. [MEMBER: He was opposed to it.] The member for Canning pointed out that he was opposed to land taxation; and the member for Northam, the Honorary Minister, fought his election on the question, opposing a candidate who supported a tax on unimproved land values—[MEMBER: And without exemptions]—and he opposed such a tax bitterly.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I did not.

MR. TAYLOR: It is only members on this side of the House who know how bitter the member for Northam can be. I fully realise that.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: You realise it?

MR. TAYLOR: I have realised it before to-day. He fought his opponent on that very plank.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Nonsense.

MR. TAYLOR: And he pointed out to his electors, "If you return this man who believes in unimproved land values taxation, you will bring a calamity upon the farming community in Northam and in this country which they will never get over." What a right-about-face! Then members on the Treasury bench take credit for initiating and bringing down legislation to this House to which they have no claim, and in which they do not believe. I challenge any member on the Government side of the House, bar two or three, and the Minister for Works is one of them; I believe the Premier is another; but I am not sure with regard to the member for Kalgoorlie (the

Attorney General), whether he specified the particular class of land tax he favoured.

MR. SCADDAN: He has not been able to clear that up yet.

MR. TAYLOR: That is a matter which is not cleared up; but when you are dealing with a legal gentleman you always know you have a difficulty in trying to clear anything up. I say I am satisfied about two out of 35 who supported unimproved land values taxation, but the rest of the Government supporters opposed it bitterly, and then they say this side of the House is not justified when it criticises them and accuses them of stealing a policy. Whatever hon. members may say with reference to this side of the House being perhaps uncharitable in its criticisms, the country as a whole knows the attitude of the Government on this particular question. Members themselves know it, and they will have a difficulty in wriggling out of their electioneering speeches on this question. I challenge them to say they advocated unimproved land values taxation. The member for Wellington (Mr. Hayward) is smiling. He knows I am telling the truth. The member for Wellington and land taxation! If the member for Wellington spoke of land taxation of any description, he would faint. [MEMBER: The Treasurer is an advocate.] I am reminded that the Treasurer has always been an ardent supporter of land values.

MR. SCADDAN: Yes, of land values, but not of the tax.

MR. TAYLOR: Of unimproved land values. I have known the hon. member too long for him to try to make me think he conscientiously believes there is justification for a land tax of any description. [Interjection by MR. GULL.] I am reminded by the member for Swan that it is a matter of expediency. It is only a matter of expediency that the Government hold their present positions, in any case. I do not know whether the hon. member supports them as a matter of expediency; but it looks mighty much like it. In reference to the attitude of the Premier to-night with regard to those railway lines that were hurried through this Parliament in such a disgraceful fashion at the close of last session—

MEMBER: Supported by the Attorney General.

MR. TAYLOR: And the Minister for Works—I want to say that the Premier was hardly fair when he accused this side of the House as a whole of opposing the principle of the construction of light lines of railway through our agricultural areas. This side of the House opposed those lines on the ground of insufficient information, and that ground only. And this side of the House will oppose any other propositions which the Government may bring down at such a late hour, without sufficient information.

MR. SCADDAN: What about those on that side?

MR. HEITMANN: They have no voice in it.

MR. TAYLOR: Notwithstanding what members on the other side of the House may say, since I have been in Parliament members on this (Opposition) side of the House have helped in every way to pass legislation that will open up our agricultural areas and our pastoral areas. In regard to the telegrams read by the Premier this afternoon from the expedition which has gone from Lake Way to Hall's Creek, it was pointed out in the old Parliament that men had come through that country with stock and had given information to me and other members that water could be obtained and a stock route made through that country. That was four or five years ago, so that it was nothing new to me for those telegrams to be received by the Premier. I knew that all that was wanted was for a party to go through in order to make a proper stock route; and I am pleased that my old friends who went through with cattle did not inform me incorrectly when they pointed out that it was easy of access as far as water was concerned.

MEMBER: Who were they?

MR. TAYLOR: There are any amount of them. My friends are not all pearl divers. With reference to the Premier pointing out that this side of the House supported the Katanning-Kojonup line, which is the most criticised to-day, we did that, accepting the statement of the member for the district, who pointed out that it was justifiable, and so did the member for Claremont (Mr. Foulkes). We did not support the line. We pointed

out that the Government were frightened to bring down other proposals on which a battle of the routes would take place. We pointed out that it was necessary to take one of those lines, and some members on this side of the House said they would not oppose that one line; but they would object to the other two, failing farther investigation, farther advice, farther information. I think some members on this side made that statement. I have not refreshed my memory from *Hansard*, but I do remember some on this side of the House indicated it would be sufficient to pass one of those lines at that late stage of the session and with the scanty information provided; that we would accept I believe the Katanning-Kojonup line, and that the other two railway projects should be held over until this session. I am pleased to know that the Premier has had an opportunity of riding over one of the routes—he did not say which—and that the work has been satisfactorily carried out. The method of construction is one which I hope the Treasurer will not oppose so strongly in the future as he did in the past. I refer to the fact that the line has been constructed departmentally. The Treasurer, I believe, takes some credit for the work being carried out so expeditiously. I do not think the present Minister for Works had an opportunity of dealing with this railway proposition until the work was partially finished. As to these Estimates, I find on the last page a total of £62,000 which I do not know how the Government can class as revenue except by a stretch of the imagination. On page 99 of the Estimates we find the heading, "Sale of Government Property Trust Account—Proceeds of Sale of Material, etc., Originally charged to General Loan Fund and now Reappropriated." I take it this refers to the sale of property purchased out of loan. That being so, I fail to see how Ministers can make the proceeds appear as a form of revenue. I do not suppose the Government imagine that next year they will have a similar amount of stock on hand that will realise £62,000. It would be refreshing to know exactly what this £62,000 represents. What was the original cost out of loan of the property sold by the Government for £62,000? With that £62,000, plus the

£60,000 they expect to get from the land tax, which will be a legitimate form of revenue, though this £62,000 is not legitimate—

**THE TREASURER:** It is not shown as revenue.

**MR. TAYLOR:** No; but it will be spent as revenue.

**THE TREASURER:** That is the mistake you make.

**MR. TAYLOR:** Does the Treasurer say it will be dealt with as loan money?

**THE TREASURER:** It will be spent on the works specified on that page of the Estimates.

**MR. TAYLOR:** Will it be spent and accounted for as loan money or as revenue?

**THE TREASURER:** What difference does that make?

**MR. TAYLOR:** The Treasurer says it makes no difference: it does not make any difference where the money comes from so long as he has it to spend.

**THE TREASURER:** They are estimates of expenditure with which you are dealing.

**MR. TAYLOR:** I wish to point out only that the Treasurer will hardly be able to find an equal sum of money next year from a similar source.

**THE TREASURER:** He will not spend it if he does not.

**MR. TAYLOR:** No. It is not necessary for me to deal farther at this stage with the Estimates. I do not know that I should have made any observations but for the continual harping of Government supporters on the attitude they have taken up on land taxation. I wish to challenge the statement of those members opposite who say that they supported in their hustings speeches a tax on the unimproved value of land. They supported a land tax, but not a tax on unimproved land values, which is a totally different form of taxation. That is the position. I can read what members said; and even the ex-Premier, Mr. Rason, in his policy speech, a report of which the Minister for Works extracted from the Press and handed to me, did not say he believed in taxing unimproved land values.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** You have accused him of being against any form of extra taxation.

**MR. TAYLOR:** Members opposite, I repeat, have been against any form of

land taxation, but the closest approach by any Government supporter to land taxation is a proposal to tax unimproved land, not to tax unimproved land values.

**MR. GULL:** Taxing unimproved lands would be better than taxing unimproved values.

**MR. TAYLOR:** I say the tax on unimproved land values is proper and equitable, the most equitable tax we could put on the land, and I question whether some Government supporters know the difference. If they do they are very clever in hiding their knowledge. And when the Minister for Works pointed out that his ex-leader Mr. Rason specified three forms of taxation, the Minister conveyed to me the notion that Mr. Rason said in his policy speech that he believed in a tax on unimproved land values. But when I analysed Mr. Rason's statement I found it was the same old cry for a tax on unimproved land.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I made that statement because I heard it said Mr. Rason was opposed to any form of increased taxation.

**MR. TAYLOR:** Mr. Rason said in his public utterances at the time he was opposed to any farther taxation that year, and he believed there would be no necessity for it. But he specified three forms of taxation: on incomes, on the totalisator, and on unimproved land. I rose to point that out. I do not want the issue to be clouded with words. I wish to challenge Government supporters. We shall have an opportunity during the next few weeks, at two elections, of deciding the validity of the statements from the Government side with reference to the tax on unimproved land values. I shall have ample opportunities for speaking during the Committee stage.

**THE TREASURER (in reply):** In the course of this debate I have been looking for some healthy, helpful criticisms; something that would assist me in concluding whether the Estimates I have had the honour of presenting to this Committee were just and equitable, and fairly well drafted. I find that this helpful criticism is largely missing from the debate. It is certainly conspicuous by its absence from the speeches of members of the Opposition. However, it appears to me that in the place of such criticism I

have had to listen, and I regret to say so, to a tirade of abuse from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath), to the eloquent fulminations of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker), and to the sardonic misrepresentations, if I may so term them, of the other Leader of the Opposition, the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), to say nothing of the wail of cowardice from the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson). Of course I must feel regretful that those four leaders of the Opposition are apparently dissatisfied with the Estimates placed before them. I should like on all occasions of this sort not only to please my friends the Government supporters, but to please members who sit opposite; for if there is one thing the Government are anxious at this juncture to perform it is to carry out a successful financial policy in Western Australia. However, I suppose it is natural to expect that members will endeavour to find fault with Estimates of this sort, and I can but console myself with the reflection that the public generally will be satisfied with the figures I have placed before the Committee. I had thought that my one opponent who accompanied me to the conference of State representatives in Melbourne, the Leader of the Opposition, would have shown a little more generosity in his remarks; but I suppose the trip across the Great Australian Bight and the passage round Cape Leeuwin had something to do with disturbing his liver; hence the bitterness of some remarks that fell from his lips. The gravamen of his charge against the Government, if I remember aright, was that we held our positions by false pretences; and others took up the parrot-cry. It echoed and re-echoed through this Chamber that Ministers held their positions by false pretences; and when one interjected "Why? Give some reason for the statement," the reply was tantamount to the explanation that because we had not wiped out the whole of the deficit by our Estimates, we had broken our pledges to the public and to the House. I desire the Committee to remember, and I say this in no bitterness of spirit, that when we have had the finances drifting for two or three years, drifting on through a surplus into a deficit and then into an increased deficit, it is absolutely impos-

sible, unless we wish to paralyse the work proceeding in the different State departments, to pull the finances together and to put the country on the right track in one year. We must gradually work our finances round, as I have previously explained to the House on more than one occasion. We must first stop the increasing deficit, stop the ebb tide; and then we shall get our finances back into safe channels, and may hope to be able next year to make a large inroad on the deficit that now appertains to the Budget. This year we have endeavoured to square our expenditure with our revenue. I do not profess to be infallible, nor do I think any other Minister would for a moment support such a contention; but Ministers do profess and do hope that not only members on our side but members in Opposition will give us credit for an honest determination and honest endeavour to square the finances so far as is possible this year. The Leader of the Opposition reminds me of a small boy at a Sunday school tea-meeting. The boy was crying, and being asked by some kindly lady visitor why he was crying, said it was because he could not eat any more. She asked him why he could not, and he said he was full. She suggested that he might pocket some of the good things on the table, but the boy still continued, to cry, and said that he could not because his pockets were full also. The Leader of the Opposition is crying out because he cannot take the whole deficit in one monthful. I would like him to bear in mind that all these things require adjustment under a steady and determined scheme. If we are to cut off the deficit, such as we were left with last year, in one fell swoop, in addition to the fact that we have to a great extent a decreasing revenue, then we must of necessity starve those great departments upon which so many of the citizens of our State are dependent; and I think it would be a bad policy and a very weak policy on the part of any Government to have made it the first consideration that they must wipe out all the deficit, in order, as the Leader of the Opposition said, to re-establish confidence and our credit. At the same time that the Leader of the Opposition advocated such a scheme as this, a scheme which no other Government in the history of this



State has been able to carry out, he cried out for more expenditure from revenue, and he forecasted that our action in not having wiped out the deficit, whether we had revenue or not with which to wipe it out, would create a slump in Western Australian stock and would probably be the failure of future Western Australian loans. Should such a thing take place, let me say with all due deference to the hon. member and his friends that it will be occasioned more by the pessimistic utterances that they have allowed to fall from their lips in this debate than by any figures I have put before members. If there is one thing that will injure the credit of a firm or of a country, it is pessimistic utterances decrying the condition of the finances.

MR. HEITMANN: You were absolutely pessimistic when the Labour Government were in power.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE TREASURER: If there is one thing that will injure individuals or the country it is for the individuals or the representatives of the country to decry their own financial arrangements. Whereas on the one hand we have an accusation launched against us by the Leader of the Opposition that our adjustment of the finances is going to injure the finances of Western Australia, on the other hand we have an accusation by the second Leader of the Opposition, that is the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), that the Estimates have been framed and that the Budget Speech was delivered more with the object of borrowing money on the most favourable terms than of putting a true statement of the finances before the Committee. That is to say, one Leader of the Opposition accuses me of framing Estimates and delivering a Budget Speech that will injure our credit, while the other Leader of the Opposition accuses me of having framed a Budget Speech which is to help me to borrow money on the London market when that time comes about. It will be interesting to know what other leaders of that party think about it. I for one am not inclined to injure the finances of the State by crying "stale fish." Would it be right for me or fair for me with the material at my disposal, with the absolute accounts and figures and state-

ments which are provided by the Treasury, if I had not framed my Budget Speech on such favourable lines as they warranted, which would establish the credit of the State in London or elsewhere when we want to borrow? My one object is to show that this great country is solvent in every respect; nay, that she is more than solvent, that she can pay many times over her liabilities, that her assets are undoubted, and that any money invested in our undertakings and public works is safely invested and likely to be remunerative and payable to those who lend it.

MR. JOHNSON: Do not talk so much and we will appreciate it.

THE TREASURER: The hon. member has done nothing else but talk since he has been in the House, and he did nothing else when he was in the Daglish Government. The only thing that Government did was to spend money on works to which it was committed by the James Government. As the hon. member knows, there were many works put in hand by the James Government to which the State was committed. As a matter of fact the Labour Government was bound to carry out those works. If there had been no Ministers at all, the works would have been finished by the departmental heads. On the other hand, when the Rason Government came into office we initiated large public works which now hon. members opposite are decrying. We initiated those railways to which the Premier has referred to-night, and we initiated and have carried out works more expeditiously than any works of the description have been carried out in the State before; and more than that, they have been carried out at a much less cost than previous works of this description.

[Several interjections from Labour Members.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members must not continually interrupt.

MR. HEITMANN: Well, we cannot help it.

THE TREASURER: The member for Subiaco made a fierce attack on the Government because we had the temerity to carry out some legislation which he as Premier had promised. I think he referred to the totalisator tax, and he referred in lengthy terms to the land tax. I do not know why he should

complain, or why he should find fault with us for carrying out a policy which he himself says he recommended. It seems to me that if he had not the energy, or if he had not the power, if I may put it in that way, to carry out his principles, he should be only too pleased to see others come in and put those principles into effect. He says that this land taxation proposal of ours should have been brought into effect last year, and that if it had and we had gained £60,000 in revenue, the deficit would have been £60,000 less. Of course that goes without saying; but I should like members to remember that the last session only lasted 21 days. Members will naturally admit that during the time we had so much to do that it would have been absolutely impossible to have carried a measure of land taxation through such as we have carried through this House during the present session.

MR. BOLTON: You carried three Bills for spur railways.

THE TREASURER: Certainly. What the country wanted at that time was to relieve the stagnation which had been in existence for the previous 18 months. What the public wanted was public works, and we immediately started them as far as we could in the time at our disposal, and we made a record in the history of the State. Naturally, before we introduced a measure for land taxation, it was necessary for the Government, newly in office, to be satisfied that it was necessary to have that taxation.

MR. HEITMANN: You told the people that it was not necessary.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE TREASURER: The Minister for Works referred very fully and read to the House the speech of the late Premier Mr. Rason, at Midland Junction I think it was, when he declared that he did not propose to impose fresh taxation that year, but he proposed first of all to endeavour to see what reductions could be made in administration and what economies could be put into force, and then the following year, if it were necessary, this taxation would be introduced. In the face of the public pronouncement of the then Premier, is it reasonable or fair for hon. members on the opposite side of the House to take Ministers to task because we carried out

the policy speech of the then Premier, and introduced this year the taxation promised by him?

MR. JOHNSON: You did not.

THE TREASURER: The hon. member should be able to prove his statements. I am sorry to say he did not prove them when he was speaking.

MR. WALKER: Did not the hon. member oppose a land tax when speaking at Busselton?

THE TREASURER: I am talking of the late Premier's policy speech. The hon. member should have been listening to my remarks.

MR. HEITMANN: He did not miss much.

THE TREASURER: No; and we would not miss much if the hon. member kept quiet for five minutes. We had an attack from the second Leader of the Opposition, the member for Subiaco, on the question of departmental *versus* contract work. This was backed up, of course, by my friend the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) reading some quotations from *Hansard* in connection with a speech I delivered on the subject of the Fremantle wharves. It is passing strange that the member for Subiaco should claim that he has a right to depart from his principles, if he has any, in connection with this matter—and I believe there were principles connected with his party, that he had the right, and he rather gloried in it, to carry out works either departmentally or by contract, and that in every case it would be perfectly justifiable on his part and would be in the best interests of the State; but because I had on different occasions advocated, as a general rule, that contract was better than day labour, I was not to have that similar right. What is the position? The position is that the member for Subiaco and his friends were returned to power in this State in 1904 on a platform which included as one of its planks the departmental construction of public works. That platform, I believe I am correct in saying, was signed by that hon. member and his colleagues. [MR. BOLTON: You are not correct.] Yet the hon. member has the audacity to come here and twit me because I have thought fit to do some works departmentally when I found that I could do them cheaper that way than by contract.

MR. HORAN : The position was forced upon you by our people.

THE TREASURER : Nothing was forced upon members. The member for Kanowna quoted one speech. Let me quote a speech I made only 12 months ago when referring to these light railways the Premier spoke of a short time back. When discussing the estimate for the construction of those railways—let me here explain that two or three times previously during the debate the Leader of the Opposition had interjected and asked me what my attitude was in regard to departmental construction of works—I said, in referring to the estimate I was putting before the House at that time for the construction of those railways, that I thought it was a cheap proposal in the way of construction—that was the estimate—but we were not going to be satisfied with the estimate altogether. We knew that certain railway contractors had been making big songs about how cheaply they could construct railway lines, and I said that I proposed to give them a chance. I said that whether I was wedded to contract or to day labour, I believed in getting the cheapest job for the State as I would for myself, and that if I could get the work done cheaper by day labour, I was not going to give it to a contractor. If I could get the work done cheaper by contract, I was not going to do it by day labour, and I concluded by saying that I thought that answered the questions put by the Leader of the Opposition. I think that is a straightforward attitude as to these matters. I have always contended that our best system is to call for tenders for public works, and I contend that to-night. I farther contend that it is a wise course to pursue to allow the Public Works Department to put in tenders in competition with the tenders from outside, so as to check them, and that whatever system is best for the State at the time we should adopt. I recognised that on many occasions myself in private business, for I have carried out works of this description by my own men and with my own supervisors, because I recognised that I could carry the work out cheaper than by letting it by contract. But that does not interfere with the general rule that you should call in competition from outside contractors,

and in that way get a better and more economical job done. I may point out that members themselves who are apt to stand to a plank in a platform such as I mentioned, the departmental construction of public works, when they want to get work done for themselves, if they want a house built or a trades hall built, how often do they get it done by day labour? Very seldom indeed. As a rule you find the very men who are crying out for departmental work in Government departments, when they have work of their own, call for tenders, and take the cheapest tender too. When I was in the Works Department I had the pleasure of calling for tenders for a large undertaking in regard to the extension of the Bunbury harbour works, which amounted to something like £60,000. I believe that was what the tenders came to on an average. The department tendered on that occasion, and were above the contractors by some three or four thousand pounds. The contract was let, and the contractor is now carrying out the work. On the other hand, we called for tenders for the agricultural lines, and the department were very much under the tenders put in. There is very little work in these contracts. It was a question of sleepers. There was very little formation indeed, and a little bit of clearing. The job was so simple and the work was especially adapted for departmental construction; hence the reason why we have such a cheap contract and such cheap work being carried out as we have heard to-night. I cannot help referring very briefly—I do not want to weary the Committee—to the fact, and I do this in justice to the member for Subiaco, that when Premier Mr. Daglish, although more or less wedded to a position of this description, let a contract for £40,000 or £50,000 for pipes, and by that means established a large pipe-works at Subiaco close to the railway station. He let it because he said, when I interjected, that no plant of this description was available. I knew that, and I knew farther that when the contractors took the contract they had no plant. They had to provide a foundry, and they had to erect plant before they could proceed with the work; so that if he were so absolutely wedded to this contract system as he and the member for Guildford would lead us

to believe, the plant would have had to be purchased and the foundry erected. They would have had to purchase a plant and carry out the work as the contractors have done. I contend that what the member for Subiaco did was absolutely best in the interests of the State. He called for tenders and found that he got a cheap tender, and he had the courage to accept the tender, and by that means established large works, which I hope will be prosperous and a benefit to the State for many years to come.

MR. JOHNSON : What did you have to say when the pipe works at Fremantle were started ?

THE TREASURER : There is one matter to which I would like to take exception, and which sounded to me like unfair criticism. The hon. member, when referring to the Treasury items, pointed out, as shown on the Estimates, a saving of £303 in administration ; but he emphasised the fact that this was counteracted by an increase in the taxation department of £3,000. I think he might have gone farther and given us credit for this being a new department. This £3,000 is the estimated cost of collecting the £60,000 revenue which we hope to get from the land tax, if it passes and becomes a law of the land. It is a new departure entirely, and will have to be created for collecting the tax should the Bill pass. Let me say in conclusion that I am pleased to think that the very generality of the attacks, the virulence of some of the remarks, and the fulminations of the deputy Leader of the Opposition all go to prove, to my mind, that these Estimates are not so very far out as members would lead us to believe. They all seem to be rather complimentary than otherwise, and I hope when we get on to the details of the Estimates members will—

MR. HEITMANN : Shake them up.

THE TREASURER : Yes ; will shake them up to the best of their ability. The hon. member is not very apt in shaking up : he takes things too easily. When we get on to the Estimates in Committee, I hope we shall pass them through as expeditiously as possible, taking into consideration the necessities in the ordinary course of debate. I repeat that my one idea right throughout is not to mislead the House in any shape or form ; of that I

hope I am incapable, although it has been insinuated. It is not my idea to mislead the country, but to put the finances of the State as justly and as legitimately as I can, according to my light and judgment.

[General debate concluded ; Votes and Items discussed as follow.]

First vote (his Excellency the Governor)—put and passed.

Vote—*Executive Council, £110 :*

Item—Clerk, £75 :

MR. HOLMAN : The Premier had said a great saving was effected in the Executive Council vote by doing away with the clerk. Previously the clerk was on the civil list, but there was an item of £75 on the Estimates for a clerk. How had the change taken place ? He understood the clerk of the Legislative Council performed the work of clerk of the Executive Council. Was that official to receive £75 in addition to his salary of £450 ? for it seemed that the salary as clerk of the Legislative Council was ample for the work he did.

THE TREASURER : A portion had been expended.

MR. HOLMAN : An explanation was needed why portion had been expended, for the Premier said there was a saving of some hundreds of pounds in the change which had been made.

THE TREASURER : The Usher of the Black Rod now carried out the duties of clerk of the Executive Council without extra pay ; but the £75 was used to pay the former clerk, and a portion had already been expended.

MR. HOLMAN : How ?

THE TREASURER : The late clerk of the Executive Council, Mr. Williams, was on leave, and he was drawing half-pay to the 18th October. Mr. C. Y. Simpson was acting clerk during his absence, and drew £11 1s. 9d. for the time he was acting. Mr. Williams had now been retired on a pension, and as he had been receiving £350 salary plus £75, and his pension was £191, there would be a considerable saving. Probably there was £30 or £40 of the amount of £75 unexpended, unless it would be necessary to give Mr. Parker

some extra clerical assistance during the year.

MR. HOLMAN: So long as assurance was given that this item would not appear on the next Estimates, he was satisfied.

MR. JOHNSON: The assistant clerk of the Legislative Council was also clerk of the Executive Council—was that so? In that case, the assistant clerk of the Council was receiving his salary and in addition received a certain amount as acting clerk of the Executive Council.

THE TREASURER: He was not getting any extra.

MR. JOHNSON: The £75 was to pay Mr. Williams, and Mr. Simpson during the time he was acting?

THE TREASURER: That was so.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Legislative Council, £2,168 :*

Item—Clerk Assistant and Usher of the Black Rod, £250 :

MR. SCADDAN: Before the appointment of Mr. Parker to this office, the Public Service Commissioner wrote to the President of the Legislative Council stating that there were several officials in the public service available for transfer, who, if their services could not be utilised shortly, would have to be retrenched shortly. The Public Service Commissioner suggested that some official in the public service could be transferred to the vacant position. There was no reply to that, apparently. A certain gentleman outside the public service altogether had been appointed to the position of Usher of the Black Rod, and he (Mr. Scaddan) protested against this procedure. There were many officers, as pointed out by the Public Service Commissioner, who were entitled to transfer, and unless they obtained this position or some other they would have to be retrenched and would have to leave the service. When vacancies occurred in either House of Parliament, officers were overlooked, because gentlemen outside, probably in the favour of some particular member, were pitchforked into the positions.

MR. TAYLOR: This man was doing some work for the Government.

MR. SCADDAN: Casual work, as far as he could understand, and it was abso-

lutely unfair to other officers of Parliament that they were overlooked. All these positions were in the hands of the President of the Council or the Speaker of the Assembly, and that was unwise and should not be permitted. We had to provide the money from the Estimates.

THE PREMIER: The Public Service Commissioner drew the President's attention to this matter, but before that minute was penned by Mr. Jull the Government had already been in communication with the Commissioner and also with the President. Practically the Government had suggested that an officer of the department should be appointed as Usher; in fact one or two were mentioned who they thought might fill the position admirably; but it was ruled that this was an office practically within the gift of the President, and it was his right to make the appointment. However, the appointment had now been made, and he understood that the officer appointed had very considerable legal knowledge and was eminently fitted for the position.

MR. JOHNSON: As a protest, he moved an amendment—

That the item of vote be reduced by £1.

He did it owing to the utterance of the Premier. Apparently we were called upon to pass a sum of money for positions that were in the gift of the President of another place. He distinctly objected to that. If we had to supply the money, we should have a say in the appointment of the officer. If there was one way to economise it was by transferring officers to vacancies of this description. There was no other way of justly treating our public servants than by simply transferring those available when vacancies of this description occurred. The appointment of someone outside the public service was extremely unfair. It was a reflection on the persons we had round about our Parliament, and he distinctly objected to the President of the Legislative Council or anybody else casting a reflection on officers of this House. There were men in this House and in another place competent to fill the position, and it was an absolute shame that a gentleman was appointed from outside who possibly had a little bit more influence than the unfortunate officers

employed in Parliament House. He had every confidence in the ability of the officers of the House to fill the position.

MR. HOLMAN: If the amendment had been to strike out the item he would have supported it. The time had come when we should do away with Ushers of the Black Rod. We could economise by abolishing a number of these fancy billets. He was sorry the hon. member did not move to strike the item out.

MR. JOHNSON was willing to withdraw his amendment.

Leave to withdraw refused.

MR. HOLMAN would move that the item be struck out altogether. Let us get the opinion of the House as to whether the time had not arrived to do away with some of these positions.

THE CHAIRMAN: The amendment already moved must be dealt with first.

MR. A. J. WILSON was rather surprised that the member for Guildford should, under cover of a motion to reduce this item by £1, for the purpose of gratifying his desire to enter a protest have seen fit to make imputations in regard to this appointment which reflected far from honourably and creditably upon the President of another place. The hon. member implied that certain outside influences had been brought to bear which were responsible for the appointment of the gentleman who now held the position. That was a very serious charge to make.

MR. SCADDAN: It was borne out by the Public Service Commissioner's report.

MR. A. J. WILSON: It was not borne out by that report, which had no reference whatever to the question of outside influence being brought to bear. The whole of the officers in regard to the Parliament of the State in no way came under the control of the Public Service Commissioner.

MR. HEITMANN: They should.

MR. A. J. WILSON: That was a matter of opinion. This presumably was an appointment exclusively under the control of the President of another place, and unless we were prepared to substantiate our charges and accusations of undue influence we certainly ought not to make them, or to imply that undue influence had been brought to bear in making that appointment. It had been

suggested that the gentleman appointed had some legal knowledge. That must necessarily be an advantage. If the member for Murchison had any idea of the work to be done in another place he would recognise that necessity existed for this appointment. The appointment was a good one, and he (Mr. Wilson) was not prepared to countenance even the mild protest suggested by the member for Guildford.

THE TREASURER: We were entering upon dangerous ground if we presumed to dictate to the Legislative Council as to what officers they should have. We should strongly resent any interference by the Council with the appointment of any officer of the Assembly, and we ought to extend the same courtesy to them. Let us do away, if we liked, with the Usher of the Black Rod, but we should still have a clerk assistant: it was necessary there should be a clerk assistant in that House, the same as there was in this. Furthermore, this gentleman not only had his duties in the House but a very arduous task in connection with his position as Clerk of the Executive Council. In that position he had any amount of work to do, and his time was very fully occupied, especially during the sitting of Parliament. A saving of something considerable had been made in the readjustment of these positions, by putting this extra work on this gentleman in addition to the work he did in Parliament House. It would be irregular for the Public Service Commissioner to control appointments of this sort. The officers of either House of Parliament were subject to Parliament only and the head represented by the honourable the Speaker or the honourable the President, as the case might be. We should be doing very wrong if we allowed any outside officer such as the Public Service Commissioner to interfere with our arrangements inside the walls of this Chamber. The rights of these appointments were certainly in the hands of the Speaker in the one case, and the President in the other, although in turn they were subject to members who had placed them in these honourable positions.

MR. SCADDAN: The Premier distinctly pointed out that he had conferred with the Public Service Commissioner and also the President of the Legislative

Council with regard to this appointment. The Premier pointed out, too, that it was advisable for the Public Service Commissioner to take into consideration the advisability of recommending some officer of the public service for this appointment. Officers in this House had been overlooked. It might be necessary to have a clerk assistant and Usher of the Black Rod in the Council. One was not taking exception to that at all. It was unfair to appoint a gentleman not an officer of Parliament and not a civil servant.

MR. HORAN: Though the title "Usher of the Black Rod" might be easily dispensed with, that officer had much to do apart from his ceremonial functions. Some members objected that the Public Service Commissioner should have made the appointment; but Section 5 of the Act clearly provided that it should not apply to officers of either House of Parliament; therefore all the talk about the Commissioner was futile. The fact that the clerk assistant was a barrister was a decided advantage.

MR. WALKER: The opposition was not to the individual or to the salary; but there was a legitimate complaint of outside influence directing the appointment of officers, and it was justifiable to assert that officers long connected with Parliament should have had an opportunity of filling such a vacancy. It was said that influence was brought to bear, and that before the vacancy occurred a wire was sent from Melbourne by Sir John Forrest, "Do not forget North," brother to Mr. Frederick North. For the truth of this he (Mr. Walker) would not vouch. It was said that the President of the Council showed his independence by making his own selection and resisting that powerful influence. To that extent the President deserved credit rather than condemnation. A protest having been lodged against appointing outsiders when there were in the service officers deserving of recognition, there was no need to vote for the amendment.

MR. TAYLOR did not object to the holder of the office, nor did he think some of the arguments for the amendment were so strong as appeared on the surface. The present clerk assistant had from time to time been temporarily appointed by the Government as assistant Parliamentary Draftsman; so he was not

altogether an outsider, and his legal knowledge would be valuable in his present position. His name was identical with that of some influential people in the State, but there was no blood relationship. Members hinted at undue influence. Let them say openly what it was, and he (Mr. Taylor) would denounce it as loudly as any. It was pleasing that the President was sufficiently independent to oppose, as was alleged, the suggestions by wire from influential members of the Federal Parliament. As it appeared that the clerk assistant was also clerk to the Executive Council, he earned his money.

Amendment negatived, the item passed.

Item—Three months' salary in lieu of leave to late Clerk of Council, £63:

MR. A. J. WILSON: Did not this item refer to the late Clerk Assistant of the Council?

THE TREASURER: Yes. Mr. Hickling had resigned after nine years' service, and had been given three months' salary.

On motion by the TREASURER the item was amended by inserting "Assistant" after "Clerk."

Other items agreed to, and the vote as amended put and passed.

Vote—Legislative Assembly, £5,581:

Item—Sergeant-at-Arms, £150:

MR. HEITMANN: We were paying this money for absolutely nothing. He was speaking not of the individual but of the office itself. Some of the Assemblies in the Eastern States did without sergeants-at-arms. In South Australia the Speaker advanced to the Chair without being conducted by a Sergeant-at-Arms. One could not see the necessity for having that officer. He moved that the item be struck out.

MR. UNDERWOOD: It was an absolute waste of £150 a year. He knew of many things in his own district on which £150 could be more profitably expended.

Amendment negatived.

Item—Hansard Reporters, 1 (chief) at £450, 4 at £350, £1,850:

MR. WALKER: A statement had been communicated to the Press by a

member of the House who had taken on himself to abuse some of the speakers, that *Hansard* was costing the country too much. The hon. member made it appear that this was due to the speeches of some hon. members, and suggested that in future *Hansard* should be reduced to merely reporting the main points of members' speeches. One could understand the member for Coolgardie holding an opinion such as that. The hon. member's speeches would always profit by being left in the hands of the reporters to cut them down. In answer to the statement that there was an exorbitant expenditure on *Hansard*, and in justice to the *Hansard* staff, and in order to draw the attention of the Government to the necessity to increase the staff and its pay, rather than have any reduction, he (Mr. Walker) desired to compare the payments made to the *Hansard* staff in Western Australia with the payments in other States and by the Commonwealth. Members would then have an appreciation of the work performed by *Hansard*, not only in connection with the reporting of speeches, but also in connection with select committees and other work connected with the proper carrying out of the reportorial services in both Houses. In the Commonwealth Parliament there were ten reporters, the Chief Reporter at £700 per annum, a second reporter at £600, and eight reporters at £500, the total cost of salaries for the reporting staff of the Commonwealth being £4,000 a year. In New South Wales, where the speaking was about what it was in this House, the Chief Reporter was paid £865, the second reporter £675, three reporters £533, two reporters £457, and three reporters £438. Those reporters also reported select committees. That brought up the salaries of the New South Wales *Hansard* staff to £5,613. Here we voted £1,850. In Victoria there were six reporters, the Chief Reporter receiving £600, the second reporter £525, one reporter £460, three reporters £430; and they did not perform the work of reporting select committees. Therefore extra money had to be expended in Victoria on a special staff for reporting select committees. For this work there was a Government shorthand writer at £610, an assistant at £600, also a clerk and assistant shorthand

writer at £485, and a clerk at £210. In Queensland there were eight reporters and four cadets in addition. The Chief Reporter received £600, two reporters £305, four £280, and one reporter £245. In New Zealand, the country of democracy, where it would be supposed speeches were reduced to their utmost limit, there were 10 reporters, the Chief receiving £400, seven reporters £300 each, one at £270, and one at £250. There was a *Hansard* supervisor at £125, also a copy supervisor at the Government Printing Office (all of which work our staff here had to perform) at a salary of £225. In New Zealand the *Hansard* reporters did not report the select committees, which was an extreme tax on the energies of the reporters. In addition there were two committee reporters in New Zealand at £300. Moreover there was an extra reporter for select committees at £150; assistance for *Hansard*, £60; special allowance for *Hansard* reporters, £100. It cost South Australia for a *Hansard* Staff (a newspaper contract arrangement), £1,919; Queensland, £2,441; Victoria, £2,825; New South Wales, £5,613; the Commonwealth Parliament, which was young comparatively and had not so much committee work as we had here, £4,000. The work of reporting every member of this House and of the Legislative Council, also all the select committee work, cost this State only £1,850. Yet the member for Coolgardie the other day complained of the extreme cost of *Hansard* in consequence of having an Opposition. If the salary paid to the *Hansard* reporters represented the amount of talking done in the Assembly, then there was less talking done in Western Australia than in any other Parliament of the Commonwealth. But we knew it was not so. He had the honour to have been in another Assembly, and had watched the reports of other Assemblies, and he took it that in no Assembly in the Commonwealth and scarcely anywhere in the world would one find less of the stonewalling tactics and long Opposition speeches than in this Assembly. Whilst he defended the House for its fair Opposition and its fair conduct of business, yet he was compelled to draw attention to the fact that we did not give adequate payment for the work done by the reporting staff. The Chief was put down



on the Estimates at £450. With the exception of New Zealand where the Chief received £400, but not having the work to do that was done here, it was the lowest salary paid in the Commonwealth. As high as £700 per annum was paid in the Commonwealth for the Chief Reporter, and in New South Wales the Chief received £865, while the second reporter received £675. The work to be done by our staff was equal to the work done by any of the staffs in any of the States. They had all the reporting in this Chamber and in addition had to attend to the very trying duties in connection with the numerous select committees which sat during the session. They had to report the select committees of the other Chamber, the joint committees, and to report the speeches in another Chamber. Yet the member for Coolgardie talked about the cost of *Hansard*, trying to make a cheap point against the Opposition. It was absolutely ridiculous. There could be no work more valuable than the reporting of members, not only reporting the points they made, but actually reporting as it should be done, so that the characters of members might be judged by the speeches they delivered. The speeches if properly reported should convey an idea of the character of the speaker, as much as possible on important matters in the first person. We ought to be able to distinguish between those members who could put grammatical thoughts together and who gave attention to their public duties, and those who could not put grammatical thoughts together; therefore it would be better to keep matters as they were. The staff here was paid too little to do the work that was expected of it. It was overtaxed, and no one knew except those who had had something to do with it, what that work was. He sympathised with the staff in the work it had to do, and while not in favour of increasing the public burdens or anxious to cry for higher rates of wages for those who might be thought to be getting fair remuneration, in this case, knowing the requirements of the work and the tax it was on the health, he impressed on the Government the necessity of considering this case.

MR. EDDY: The remarks he had made in reference to this question were no

insinuation against the *Hansard* reporters. His suggestion at the time was that this State was not receiving enough solid and valuable matter from members of the House. His remarks were directed against the stuff that was issued from members of the House and which the *Hansard* reporters had to record. One would judge from the remarks of the member for Kanowna that the *Hansard* reporters were overworked. He did not wish to insinuate anything of the kind. The member for Kanowna made reference to some grammatical sentences which were uttered; and his remarks about perhaps some of his (Mr Eddy's) grammar, because he might not have the eloquence the hon. member possessed, were absolutely offensive.

MR. WALKER: What were the hon. member's remarks but offensive when he accused members on this (Opposition) side of talking?

MR. EDDY: His (Mr. Eddy's) degree of want of knowledge he was willing to acknowledge. As to the utterances by the member for Kanowna, he could only treat them with the contempt they deserved. One must rise to protect himself when utterances of the kind were made by a gentleman of supposed letters, as the member for Kanowna was reputed to be. He wished to repeat that his utterances in reference to the payment of the *Hansard* staff were not directed against those gentlemen. He was prepared to admit that the members of the *Hansard* staff were not at all overpaid, and that they did their work well.

MEMBER: The printing bill was a big item.

MR. EDDY: That was true; but he wished to state again that his remarks were not against those men, but against speeches which were sometimes delivered, and which occupied one, two, three, or four hours, there being a reiteration of stuff over and over again.

MR. WALKER: Was not that offensive?

MR. EDDY: Some members talked for ten or 20 minutes or for an hour or four hours, and absolutely said nothing. That was the reason of his remarks. *Hansard* reporters had to sit in their chairs and take stuff which was absolutely a waste of time and wilful waste of public money. (Interjection.) If it was offensive it was only in reply to the offensive

remarks of the member for Kanowna. He trusted he had not overstepped the bounds, but if he had, it was only from his utter want of knowledge which the member for Kanowna so offensively insinuated against him.

MR. WALKER: The remarks made by him were in reply to "stuff," to use the language of the hon. member, personally uttered towards him. The hon. member not here, but publicly in the Press, uttered those sentiments which we heard him express just now, and which had been uttered towards this side of the House indiscriminately. He felt the only way in which he could make the hon. member feel he had done wrong was to be to a certain extent personal towards him, and to drive it home. While sorry to gratuitously hurt anyone's feelings or to parade any possible superiority in power of expression, yet when the hon. member criticised the talk on this side of the House and designated it—as though he were a judge—as "stuff" and got his sentiments published, he deserved a rap on the knuckles. He (Mr. Walker) had endeavoured to give it, perhaps not in the very best of taste, but in such a way as to make him feel it; and it was to be hoped he would never forget it.

MR. TAYLOR: Not only the member for Coolgardie but other members on the Government side of the House had during this session accused the Opposition side of wasting time, and as an argument in favour of that they pointed out that it was costing the country a deal of money for *Hansard* and for printing. It was only by the speeches of members being reported in *Hansard* that the people could judge as to the value of members as members of the House and as representing their constituencies. One could not judge of a man as a member of Parliament who sat in his seat year after year and did not say anything, but simply voted with his party as he was told. It was by the independent spirit of members who got up and either opposed or supported a measure and gave their reasons for doing so that this country could judge of their value. It was necessary that the speeches should be recorded. He was sorry that in Committee the speeches were so much curtailed. That was not the fault of the *Hansard* staff, as it was done by direction. It would be

much better for the State if the speeches in Committee were reported at greater length, because we would then get the full value of the thoughts expressed by members, no matter on which side of the House they sat. The work was done in Committee. Members who did not do work in Committee depended on second-reading speeches, which were fully reported, and they were not present at the Committee stage of the measure when it was being put into form. We ought to vote money more liberally for the services of *Hansard*, and for the printing of speeches in Committee. No one would accuse him of being a great offender in this particular, but when he had anything to say he would say it, and he could depend upon *Hansard* to report him. He had no fault to find with their reporting, after having had six years' experience of it, and the money was not wasted. If some members judged the value of other members' sentiments and statements by that of their own, there might be some justification for their pointing out the waste of expenditure.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Vote—Joint Houses of Parliament, £4,467—agreed to.

Vote—Premier's Office, £705 :

Items—Secretary to Premier, £400 ; clerk, £220 :

MR. TAYLOR: The Premier had a secretary and clerk. He (Mr. Taylor) found some fault with this vote last session, but he wished to know whether it was the intention of the Premier to keep the clerk permanently there. He did not want a Premier's Department to be created again. In the old time we had a difficulty in doing away with the Premier's Department, and no one knew it better than the Chairman (Mr. Illingworth). When the Chairman had the honour to be Colonial Secretary, he had the arduous task of amalgamating the Premier's Office and the Colonial Secretary's Department. We did not want this department to grow up. It seemed as if this was to be a permanent appointment, judging from the salary on the Estimates.

THE PREMIER intended to retain the clerk, who had ample work to do.

The present secretary worked till all hours of the night, and well earned his salary. Each of the preceding Premiers (Mr. Rason and Mr. Daglish) left a minute as to the good work done by the present secretary, and affirmed that his salary was insufficient. He (the Premier), being also Minister for Lands, found his work very heavy; and it was greatly increased by the additional correspondence from the Federal departments and from the Public Service Commissioner, papers relating to appointments made by the latter passing through the Premier's office. The time of both clerk and secretary was fully occupied, and probably no other officers in the service worked longer hours.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

## STOCK ROUTE, EXPLORATION REPORT.

### GOLDFIELDS TO KIMBERLEY.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I have a rather interesting telegram I would like to read to members. It is from Mr. Canning, who was appointed by the Government to take charge of an exploring party from Lake Way to Sturt Creek. Mr. Canning left last May, and he telegraphs to-day from Hall's Creek, Kimberley, as follows:—

Arrived Day Camp, Flora Valley; got through without loss camels or horses. Can get stock route, well watered, fair feed, very little stony country; many wells giving good supply, seven to ten feet. Water rising four feet from surface. Anticipate wells 20 feet will give ample supply good mob of cattle. Shall have to bore in places going back at either end. Water assured now between Auld Lake and 60 miles Godfrey's Tank about every 10 miles. No doubt get sufficient over remaining portion; deeper towards Wiluna. Sandhills avoided where possible; long stretches without any; other places had short distances, but generally broken and low. Party well. Will have to wait here until summer rains. Camels could not face sand without rain and spell.

## ADJOURNMENT OF HOUSE (ROYAL SHOW).

The PREMIER moved—

That the House at its rising do adjourn till 7.30 p.m. to-morrow.

MR. TAYLOR: The motion was to enable members to attend the Royal Agricultural Show, to see the stock and agricultural products of the country. Members after spending a day at the show would not be much inclined for work in the evening. Better adjourn till 4.30 on Thursday.

The PREMIER was only following the usual custom. If the Opposition were willing to forego one private member's night, he hoped they would not subsequently accuse the Government of striking notices off the paper at the last moment. He would amend the motion as desired.

Motion as altered put and passed.

The House adjourned accordingly at 10.45 o'clock, until the next Thursday afternoon.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 1st November, 1906.

	PAGE
Questions: Telephone Book ... ..	2606
Camels, Importation ... ..	2607
Reports: Boiler Explosion Inquiry ... ..	2607
Fishing Industry Inquiry ... ..	2607
Bills: Racecourse Licensing, &c. ... ..	2607
Perth Town Hall (site), Legislative Council's suggested Amendment ... ..	2607
Annual Estimates resumed: Lands Department ...	2614
Electoral: Resignation of a Member (Mount Leonora) ... ..	2634

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

## PRAYERS.

## QUESTION—TELEPHONE BOOK.

MR. BOLTON (for Mr. Johnson) asked the Premier: Will he ascertain from the proper authorities—1, What is the quarterly cost of printing the W.A. Telephone Book? 2, Amount paid in Eastern States per page for this book? 3, Amount paid per page in W.A. for supplementary lists?