by the Titles Office in the last year or two.

THE PREMIER: This is a very fair department on which to make a profit, because the people dealing with it get good value for their money.

MR. QUINLAN: True. I am not opposed to revenue being derived; but it is hard that one particular section of the community should pay for these extra certificates, when there is really no need for them after a certain number of indorsements has been made.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10·47 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 17th September, 1902.

	Page
Questions: Boiler Preservatives	1132
Railway Freight Charges	1133
Hansard Reports: Question of Privilege	1133
Select Committee, Change of a Member	1134
Federal Union, Separation of Western Australia...	1134
Motions: Spark-Arresters, to inquire	1134
Pairing by Members in Divisions	1135
Papers ordered: Camels Importation	1134
Exploratory Trip, Mr. Hill	1135
Bills: City of Perth Building Fees Validation, in Committee (resumed), reported	1136
Marine Stores, second reading, in Committee...	1140
Brands, discharge of order...	1142
Public Service Act Amendment, second reading	1142
Public Works, recommittal	1155

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS: 1, Report of Royal Commission on Donnybrook freestone (moved for by Mr. Ewing). 2, Return showing Wharfage and Port Dues received at Fremantle (moved for by Mr. Monger). 3, Alteration to Railways Classification and Rate Book. 4, Works Department, report for 1901.

Ordered: To lie on the table.

QUESTION—BOILER PRESERVATIVES.

MR. RESIDE asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Why the Railway Department is paying 7s. 6d. per gallon for Atlas Boiler Preservative when the Black Swan Boiler Fluid appears on Government contract list at 4s. per gallon. 2, Whether the Government have made any practical trial of the Black Swan Boiler Fluid. 3, Whether it is a fact that instructions were issued to all sheds to increase the consumption of Atlas Boiler Fluid. If so, why?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:—1, The Black Swan Boiler Fluid was brought under the notice of Mr. Rotheram about two years ago by Mr. G. Henriques, of 20, Short Street, Fremantle. On the 29th January, 1902, five (5) drums were supplied for trial free to Locomotive Department. This trial is still proceeding in company with other boiler fluids, and a decision is not yet arrived at. The following fluids and compounds are now being systematically tested: Atlas Preservative Fluid, Kelofuge Fluid, McFie's Fluid, Black Swan Fluid, Imperial Boiler (compound), Cleansing and Preserving (compound). The contractors for this Black Swan Fluid are W. Sandover & Co., and the manufacturer is Mr. Henriques. The title is merely a registered name and has no connection with any local business using the same prefix. Locomotive Department has no knowledge why tenders were invited for Black Swan Fluid nor as to which, if any, Government Department is using it. The Stores were asked by Locomotive Department for Atlas Preservative, its merits being ascertained, and until the trials of the other fluids have been concluded it is not desirable to depart from a known article in favour of an untried and unknown article. The price becomes a factor for consideration only after the merit of the article is arrived at. 2, Test trials are proceeding 3, The Government Stores accepted a tender for Atlas Boiler Fluid at the beginning of year 1901-2 for use of Loco-

motive Department. The Locomotive Department had nothing to do with the Black Swan Fluid. The contractor, in December, 1901, complained that the branch was not taking the quantity of Atlas Boiler Fluid that he had contracted to supply. The matter was then taken up and it was seen that the various sheds had not been using the proper quantity. In February, 1902, the officers at sheds had their attention drawn to the fact that the Atlas Fluid was not being used in a proper manner. In May, 1902, the attention of the officers was again drawn to the fact that the proper quantity of Atlas Fluid was not being used. In July, 1902, the quantities of fluid put into boilers, before and after washing out, were reduced one-half; this decreasing of the quantities was done to suit the different kind of water in use. During the present month (September, 1902) the quantity has been farther reduced at some of the sheds.

QUESTIONS—RAILWAY FREIGHT CHARGES.

MR. THOMAS asked the Minister for Railways: Whether he has made an estimate as to the amount of money which will be saved on the Eastern Goldfields by the decrease in freight on manures and wire fencing. If so, what will be the saving?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: No.

MR. THOMAS also asked: 1, What was the freight per ton on explosives from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie prior to the recent increase in rate? 2, What was the freight after the increase? 3, What is the present freight per ton? 4, How many tons of explosives are carried on the Eastern Goldfields Railway per month? 5, Is it a fact that the rates have been reduced 10 per cent. on explosives? 6, What is the total monthly saving to the mining industry on account of this reduction?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, £7 12s. 7d. 2, £8 3s. 9d. 3, £8 3s. 9d., less 10 per cent. in lots of 4 and 10 tons. 4, 120 tons per month approximately. 5, Yes, in lots of 4 and 10 tons consigned to one consignee for distances of 150 miles and over. 6, £98 5s. (calculated on 120 tons per month).

HANSARD REPORTS—QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE.

MR. M. H. JACOBY had given notice of the following motion:—

That the *Hansard* report of the discussion in this House in connection with the Railways Acts Amendment Bill, on the night of 26th August and the morning of the 27th August ultimo, is incorrect, and that in reports of such important debates any incorrectness may endanger the privileges of honourable members of this House.

THE SPEAKER: With regard to this notice of motion which has been placed on the Notice Paper, it has apparently been brought forward on a question of privilege, with a view to drawing attention to what is stated to be an inaccurate report in *Hansard*. It is a well-known matter of Parliamentary procedure that a question of privilege must be brought on at once or as soon as possible, without any delay. What are the facts of the case with regard to drawing attention to this question of privilege? The suspension of the member for West Perth (Mr. Moran)—it is apparently upon this that the notice of motion has been given—took place on the 26th August. The *Hansard* report was laid upon the table on the 2nd September; this notice of motion was given on the 11th September, and it actually comes forward here on the 17th September. I think it must be apparent to every member of the House that there has been an unjustifiable delay, which is not permitted by the procedure of Parliament, in bringing this question forward. I will read what *May* says with regard to that:—

The Speaker is responsible for the due enforcement of the rules, rights, and privileges of the House, and when he rises he is to be heard in silence. In accordance with his duty, he declines to submit motions to the House which obviously infringe the rules which govern its proceedings; such as a motion which would create a charge upon the people, and is not recommended by the Crown; a motion touching the rights of the Crown, which has not received the Royal consent; a motion which anticipates a matter which stands for the future consideration of the House, which raises afresh a matter already decided during the current session, or is otherwise out of order.

I hold it to be a gross abuse of the privileges of this House to bring forward such a motion as this, after the delay which has occurred, and therefore I decline to submit the motion to the

House. I farther have to state to the House that there is no justification whatever for the statement made in this motion that the report is inaccurate. I have looked over the report as it appears in the journal of the House and also in the *Hansard* report of what took place, and I say that both those reports are most accurate and correct.

MR. JACOBY: May I be allowed to explain?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot make an explanation.

MR. JACOBY: I wish to make an explanation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot.

MR. JACOBY: Very well, sir.

SELECT COMMITTEE, CHANGE OF A MEMBER.

On motion by the Hon. C. H. RASON, ordered that he (Mr. Rason) be discharged from serving on the select committee upon the Collie to Collie-Boulder Railway Bill, and that Mr. Hopkins be appointed in his place.

PAPERS—CAMELS IMPORTATION.

On motion by MR. GORDON, ordered: "That all departmental correspondence and minutes in connection with Faiz Mahomet's application for permission to import certain camels in the year 1900 be laid on the table of the House.

FEDERAL UNION, SEPARATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough) had given notice of the following motion:—"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Government should take such steps as will bring about the separation of Western Australia from the Federal Union, in order that this State may have the same control over its finances and other important matters as was enjoyed before the union; the present time being more opportune for withdrawing than a more distant date, when this State may have to share a heavy Federal debt." He moved that the order be postponed for a fortnight.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No.

THE PREMIER: This was an important motion, and he had hoped that not only would the hon. member be prepared with the necessary data to support it, but that he already had the data before he gave the notice of motion. In view of the importance of the matter in the eyes of those outside the House, he would ask the hon. member not to request an adjournment for so long as a fortnight, but to make the period a week.

MR. STONE agreed to ask for a week.

Order accordingly postponed for a week.

MOTION—SPARK ARRESTERS, TO INQUIRE.

MR. T. F. QUINLAN (Toodyay) moved:

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the respective qualities of the different spark arresters at present in the hands of the Railway Department of this State, and to consider and inquire into the methods of testing spark arresters employed by the Railway Department for the past twelve months, with the view of reporting as to the most efficient.

Only a few moments ago he received what might be called his brief in this matter; but as it contained some very harsh statements, he would ask the House simply to adopt the motion. Those interested desired to secure a pronouncement that Collie coal only should be used for the railway locomotives, and that efficient spark arresters should be provided which would not only prevent sparks but would allow trains to run to time. It was stated the country had been put to great expense for testing the spark arresters of different patentees; and he was urged to move for this inquiry especially on behalf of Mr. Harwood, who had taken out a patent and had pleaded that he was unable to obtain a fair test, though he claimed his arrester was perfect. All knew the losses sustained every summer by the Government through bush-fires caused by engine sparks; and it was needless to enlarge on the benefits derived from using our local coal. Anything that would tend to make its use safe would be an undoubted advantage to the State. The document he had received made severe references to Mr. Rotheram and other officers; therefore he (Mr. Quinlan) hoped the House would appoint a select committee. It would be manifestly unfair to those officers, especially to Mr. Rotheram, to read anything contained in the document, for the allegations

therein should be tested by the evidence of both sides before the committee.

MR. M. H. JACOBY (Swan) seconded the motion.

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken, and a committee appointed comprising Mr. Atkins, Mr. Harper, Mr. Reside, Mr. Yelverton, also Mr. Quinlan as mover; with power to send for persons and papers, and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report this day fortnight.

PAPERS—EXPLORATORY TRIP, MR. HILL.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas) moved:

That all papers in connection with Mr. Hill's exploratory trip and his negotiations with the Government be laid upon the table of the House.

Letters and interviews had appeared in the Press in reference to Mr. Hill's negotiations with the Government. Whether Mr. Hill had a grievance or not he (Mr. Thomas) did not know, neither did other members of the House; but so that members might be made aware of the facts of the case he moved the motion.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): There was no objection to laying the papers on the table; but when a motion was brought forward some reasons should be given. Mr. Hill sent some papers to the department asking that they might be purchased, and putting the price of £300 on the reports if the department wished to publish them. The Government Geologist declined to recommend the purchase of the reports, and instructions were given for the papers to be returned to Mr. Hill. If the papers were to be laid on the table the orginal documents would have to be returned to the department, so that any member who desired to take the trouble to peruse them could do so. Members would then be able to judge whether the department had acted properly in declining to purchase the reports. He hoped the hon. member would be able to say that the original papers would be handed to the department, so that they could be placed before members.

MR. THOMAS (in reply): Reasons had been given for moving the motion.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Could the original papers be obtained from Mr. Hill?

MR. THOMAS: That was not known to him. But if the papers were to be laid on the table, an attempt should be made to have the original papers which were sent to Mr. Hill laid on the table with the other documents. But he was not Mr. Hill's keeper. Mr. Hill was employed by a syndicate with which he (Mr. Thomas) was connected some two and a half years ago: that was all he knew about Mr. Hill. He (Mr. Thomas) had been approached in reference to this matter, like other hon. members, and he was anxious to have a look at the papers.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—PAIRING BY MEMBERS IN DIVISIONS.

Debate resumed from the 3rd September, on the motion by Mr. Jacoby "That the practice of pairing, as carried out in the Imperial and Commonwealth Parliaments and most of the State Parliaments, be adopted by this House."

MR. JACOBY asked if the Speaker had received any replies to inquiries.

THE SPEAKER: A reply had been received by him from the Speaker of the South Australian Parliament, to the following effect:—

Pairs are recognised and recorded in the Legislative Assembly here, but only on being handed to the clerk when each division takes place. If members desire to pair for days or weeks, the practice is to make arrangements with the whips, who undertake all responsibility.

Mr. Gale, our late Clerk, had written him as follows regarding the practice in the Commonwealth Parliament:—

I hasten to reply immediately to your official inquiry *re* pairs, which has just reached me. The procedure adopted in the Commonwealth Parliament is that laid down by *May* (*vide* p. 351). As regards detail, I cannot do better, I think, than send you a copy of a page from our pair-book. This book always lies on the table of the House. The clerks have nothing whatever to do with it, and do not officially know it is there. As a rule, the party whips look upon it as their family bible.

These were the only two communications he had received, and from them it appeared that pairs were not officially recognised. Looking through the journals of the House of Commons, he had observed that no entry was made of

pairs; in fact, not even the names of members taking part in a division appeared in the journals. Division lists, however, were published daily. Pairs did not appear to be officially recognised anywhere, being regarded merely as a kind of arrangement made with the whips on each side, for which the House was in no way responsible. As Mr. Gale remarked, the Commonwealth Parliament did not recognise the pairing system.

MR. JACOBY: Might the pairs be published in our *Hansard?*

THE SPEAKER: That would be an official recognition.

MR. JACOBY: The recording of pairs in *Hansard* was permitted by other Australian State Parliaments. If the same system could be adopted here, he was prepared to withdraw his motion.

THE SPEAKER: The newspapers published pairs, but *Hansard,* he thought, did not.

MR. JACOBY: Yes; pairs were recorded in the *Hansard* of three Australian State Parliaments, and also in the *Hansard* of the Commonwealth Parliament.

MR. THOMAS: Reading a number of the Commonwealth *Hansard* only yesterday, he had observed that pairs were recorded.

THE SPEAKER: It was for the House to say whether that system should be adopted here.

Question put and negatived.

CITY OF PERTH BUILDING FEES VALIDATION BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Mr. ILLINGWORTH took the Chair; Mr. PURKISS in charge of the Bill.

Resumed from the 28th August, on an amendment in Clause 1 moved by Mr. Atkins.

MR. ATKINS, with a view to moving another amendment of which notice had been given, asked leave to withdraw this amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

MR. ATKINS moved that the following be inserted at the beginning of the clause, "except as hereinafter provided."

MR. PURKISS: If this amendment were carried, and if the second amendment of which the hon. member had given notice were not carried, the clause would be meaningless.

MR. DAGLISH: Consideration of the Bill had been adjourned on the understanding that the member in charge would put the House in possession of certain information. There was considerable divergence between the statements made by the member for the Murray (Mr. Atkins) on the one hand, and those made by the Premier on the other, as to what had been the practice. The member for the Murray had said that the City Council had charged fees higher than those adopted in their own building by-laws, whilst the Premier had stated that the necessity for the Bill arose out of an inadvertent omission on the part of the Perth City Council to gazette the by-laws. If the latter were the case, the Committee were not justified in weakening the powers of the City Council in regard to charging building fees. If, however, injustice had been done, the Committee were warranted in protecting the interests of those affected. Presumably the Committee were not prepared to affirm that the inspection fee for a building of five or six storeys should be the same as for a single-storey building.

MR. PURKISS: The case was quite simple. Up to the year 1897, building fees had been charged by the Perth City Council under certain by-laws. In 1897 the City Council in their wisdom thought fit to amend the by-laws in several unimportant respects, and decided, in doing so, to re-enact the original by-laws, in order that the whole of the by-laws might be comprised in one volume. By inadvertence, the City Council omitted to re-enact the schedule of fees contained in the original by-laws. That schedule was missing until some time in 1898, when it was discovered that since some date in the previous year building fees had, in a certain sense, been levied illegally.

THE PREMIER: On the assumption that the schedule was in the by-laws.

MR. PURKISS: Yes. The fees were freely paid, neither the City Council nor the contractors being aware of the omission of the schedule. This Bill was necessary now in order to prevent the City Council from being sued for the return of fees considered at the time of payment to be legally payable by the

contractors and to be legally receivable by the City Council.

MR. DAGLISH: Were fees being charged on the same schedule?

MR. PURKISS: Yes. The fact that no one had discovered the omission of the schedule for four years showed how innocently the City Council had acted and how freely the contractors had paid the fees. Now some smart contractor—and it should be remembered the owners really paid the fees—said "Here is a nice little chance of getting back those fees." He understood the member for the Murray (Mr. Atkins) did not wish to attack that matter, but it appeared that under these amending by-laws certain fees were charged in respect of inspection of buildings. The by-laws under which fees were charged were read to mean that the fees should be chargeable on each floor area of the building in construction. That was the intention of the by-law, and it was carried out so far as concerned the opinion of both contractors and owners. Any of us could examine a little one-floor cottage, but when it came to estimating four or five floor areas in structures such as Prince's Buildings, Moir's Chambers, or the new chambers erected by the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), very expert knowledge was required. In the expression "floor area," unfortunately the word was in the singular, but both contractors and those who were building houses read the by-law to mean that the fee should be levied in respect of each individual floor area. The fees were paid for years, but at the beginning of this year, prior to March, doubts arose as to whether "floor area" included the various floor areas in each building, and this Bill asked in the second place for the validation of fees received up to the 1st March last. In March the matter was put straight. Under this validation measure no new fee was intended to be levied. The law was one that not only protected the owners, but also the public. The fees which had been paid were in reality paid by the owners, because a contractor in estimating the price of a building included all levies and charges. No doubt the member for the Murray had been put in motion by some of these contractors, who probably would try to get back those fees which they levied upon the owners of the property. It had been suggested that this agitation was at the instance of an inspector of buildings who had been discharged from the employ of the municipal council. He did not know that such was the case, but it had been suggested to him. There was nothing wicked or behind the bush at all about this measure. To now open the door to a multiplicity of actions against the municipal council would be to commit a wrong.

MR. ATKINS: Not holding a brief for any man, he must contradict emphatically, from his point of view, almost all that the member in charge had said. In 1896 he himself asked the person who was running these by-laws what he would have to pay—he was then about to build a house. He lived in a two-storey house. Mr. Stevens read the clause through, and said the expression "floor area" referred to the area of the building. That had never been altered until February, 1902. He paid on one floor. The firm to which he belonged, and before he left it to come to this beautiful place, built a malthouse on Mount Bay Road, having five floors (he thought), and they paid on one floor area. But anybody who was fool enough and did not know sufficient had to pay on every floor area. In 1898 the City Council made a new set of by-laws and put exactly the same wording as in the by-laws of 1896; and when they could get anybody to pay for more than one floor they took the money. Therefore, when people read the by-law they objected, and the City Council, or the men running the things for the City Council, said: "If you don't pay, you don't build; and that is all about it." What could any builder do? Contractors estimated on one floor area, and then were mulcted for the difference. Atkins and Law paid only on one floor area, but other builders were paying on four or five. Why were some people allowed to pay for the ground floor area, and others compelled to pay in respect of each floor? Throughout Australia building fees were only a safeguard to prevent the encroachment of buildings on footpaths, and were not a source of revenue, but covered the cost of administration simply. The maximum fee in Adelaide was £10, in Melbourne £6, on any addition £2 2s. In Hobart and Brisbane there was no fee. In 1897 Mr. Goss paid the Perth

Council £10 14s. 3d. for three floors, when he ought to have paid only £3 12s.; and in the same year he paid £16 6s. instead of £4 4s., and £12 18s. instead of £4 7s. 6d. Mr. Hill, in 1896, paid £7 16s. instead of £6. All the complainants had been charged on the higher scale. Both sets of printed by-laws stated additions would be charged at half-price; yet in three cases Mr. Vincent had to pay the full fee. This branch of the City Council was a squeezing establishment. Mr. Levy had recovered judgment in the Supreme Court in respect of fees charged in 1897 and 1898; and in respect of 1900 fees the council had made him a voluntary refund. Three more suits were pending for the recovery of excess payments; and surely the Committee would not, on the word of one hon. member, upset Supreme Court verdicts, the Court having had before it all the facts.

THE PREMIER: Did not the owners of the buildings pay to Mr. Levy the fees paid by him to the council? Were they not a charge in his contract?

MR. ATKINS: No. Mr. Levy and everyone else who understood the law had expected to pay on only one floor, but on tendering payment had been told they must pay for each floor.

THE PREMIER: That would apply to the first misapprehension; but none would make the mistake the second time.

MR. ATKINS: Granting that; had the Council therefore any right to rob the people? In 1898 a fresh set of by-laws was printed; and there were three cases in 1899, one in 1900, and two in 1901. People had been charged £18 instead of £6, £14 instead of £4, £37 instead of £18, £15 instead of £5, £13 instead of £6, £7 instead of £2 14s.; proving conclusively that not for 15 months, but from 1896 to 1902, the council had charged on more than one floor area; and a council which could not in five years make its by-laws lawful, ought not to be allowed to make by-laws. Besides, the charges were excessive; for nowhere in Australia did building fees produce a yearly income of from £1,000 to £2,000. The council must have known the charge was illegal; for he (Mr. Atkins) had been informed that during this period, councillors did not pay any fees on their own buildings, such, for instance, as the Theatre Royal; while Councillor Oldham, who did not pay fees, had told the other contractors they need not pay. None would seek to penalise the council for a mistake; but this alleged mistake had lasted for five years, and had been from the commencement nothing but blackmail.

THE PREMIER: These by-laws had, legally or illegally, been enforced — whether for 15 months or for several years did not matter to the Committee. Assuming that they had been in force from 1896 to 1902 and the fees under them collected, we wished to know who paid those fees which the builders and contractors now sought the right to recover. *Prima facie*, the length of time for which the by-laws had been operative was an argument against the complainants, who had therefore less reason to ask that they should be enabled, by the rejection of the Bill, to reopen transactions some years old, and to disturb the financial arrangements of the council, because they had for years submitted to a charge they now found to be illegal. Who had paid the fees? A builder might at first tender on the assumption that he would pay for only one floor area, but on applying for a license he would be charged for each floor; and subsequently, whatever he would pay doubtless came out of the pocket of the building owner; and Mr. Levy had by his judgment recovered money to which he had no claim. The hon. member had asked whether the council had a right to rob the people. If the Bill were not passed, the builders and contractors would rob the council and the building owners, by recovering moneys to which the plaintiffs had no moral claim, such fees having been paid by the contractors as mere agents for the building owners. There was not much objection to the amendment, if the money which had been wrongfully paid got back into the pockets of those who had paid it. But he hoped the Committee would not allow those who had not actually paid the money to put into their pockets money belonging to a third person.

MR. FOULKES: The member for the Murray had said that on one occasion when he was building a two-storey house, he inquired at the City Council offices,

and was told that, although he was building two floors, he need only pay fees on one floor. Had the same information been given to others? The Premier had mentioned the case of one Levy, a contractor, who, having had experience of the charges made in connection with one contract, afterwards knew exactly what fees had to be paid. But the Committee had no evidence before them as to whether that contractor had more than one contract during that time.

THE PREMIER: Then there was nothing to recover.

MR. FOULKES: There might be other contractors who only had one contract, and these contractors might have taken the same course as the member for the Murray did, and ask what fees had to be paid on a particular building, and have received the same answer as the member for the Murray. In such cases the Perth Council made certain representations to the contractors, that they need only pay on one floor; that being so, the Perth Council had made a mistake, and contractors had put in tenders for the construction of buildings believing they had certain fees to pay. The Committee had also been told that three writs had been issued, and the Bill said that these actions which had been commenced should be stopped. He did not believe in retrospective legislation; the Committee had no right to say that the Supreme Court should not hear certain cases.

MR. HIGHAM: By looking at the by-laws of the Perth Council in the orange book, it was seen that a mistake had been made in not having a schedule of rates gazetted, and secondly in not clearly defining that more than one floor was to be charged for. The Perth Council evidently realised that a mistake had been made, for they issued by-laws which were to be found in the green book, and these by-laws clearly expressed that every floor had to pay the fee. The Perth City Council, in enforcing a charge on more than one floor, were just as immoral as the contractors who tried to recover fees which they had not paid out of their pockets. The Perth City Council for five years had illegally collected building fees, and it was not right that they should retain them. The fees were exorbitant; but that was a matter for the public to deal with.

MR. QUINLAN: The contractor Levy recovered in respect of the Newcastle Chambers in Murray Street, a three-storey building, for which the owners had paid the fees; and there was no doubt what the owners would do now that Levy had recovered from the Perth Council. If the Bill was not passed, the Perth Council would lose £1,000. The question of fees did not concern the Committee. The case for the City Council was briefly as follows:—

> The Bill does not in any way affect any fees to be levied in the future. Such fees are governed by the by-laws gazetted on 7th March, 1902. It is rendered necessary by the following circumstances. In June, 1897, the schedule under which the building fees were charged was repealed, and was not re-gazetted owing to inadvertance until September of the following year. The fact had come to the knowledge of certain contractors who are claiming for the refund of fees charged during that period. The effect of this Bill will be to validate such fees. It was the practice of the council in the past to charge fees on the various floor areas of a building. It was, however, ascertained that the expression "floor area" was not defined as clearly as it might have been in the by-laws, and that the power of the council to charge on more than one floor area was doubtful. The City Council desire to be protected against any claim which might be made against it for the refund of fees on upper floors, which were levied in the past, and the Bill, if passed, will validate such fees. At the beginning of the present year a new by-law was passed, in which the power of the council to charge on all floor areas was clearly defined.

This case was set out by the Town Clerk, and while he (Mr. Quinlan) admitted it was a hardship to pay for more than one floor, as the Premier had said, it was to be assumed that the owner in every instance paid the fees, and the contractor got it out of the owner. It was for the Committee to say whether the law should be made retrospective.

MR. DAGLISH: After hearing both sides, it was plainly the duty of the Committee to protect the Perth City Council. There was an objection to passing a retrospective measure, unless under special circumstances, but he was satisfied it was the duty of the Committee, when a public body had honestly attempted to carry out work in a fair manner, and had imposed certain by-laws through mistake which had been invalidated, to validate

those charges. Whether the fees were too high here in comparison with those charged in other cities was beside the question. The Perth City Council had full power to fix the fees; but because members thought the fees too high, we had no right to interfere with them. That could not be urged as a ground for rejecting the measure. It had been urged that there had been partiality in the administration; some had not paid the fees at all, some had paid the fees on one floor, and others on all floors. It was outside the province of the Committee to investigate such a point. After all, we had before us only an *ex parte* statement and did not know the circumstances of the case cited by the member for the Murray. The ratepayers alone were entitled to look into these matters and demand explanations. It was a reasonable proposition that a man building a six-storey house should pay more than another man building a much cheaper structure requiring much less supervision. The main question was whether we should protect the City Council in an action properly taken except for an inadvertence. He would support the clause as against the amendment.

MR. JACOBY: After carefully listening to the debate he had not heard sufficient to justify a vote in favour of retrospective legislation. The City Council by their own mistake had found themselves unable to claim certain fees which they desired to charge. If it was to become the practice of Parliament to validate loosely drawn municipal by-laws, we should find ourselves inundated with legislation of this kind. By accepting the amendment we should cast on the municipalities the duty of drawing and enforcing their by-laws in a legal manner. No doubt, as the Premier had said, contractors were fair game to most people; but there was no reason why we should not help them in this instance.

THE PREMIER: By the amendment, the contractors would benefit unfairly.

MR. JACOBY: We did not know that the money would not be claimed by the owner of the building from the contractor where it did not rightly belong to the latter. It had been stated that if the amendment were adopted, the City Council would be called on to repay fees amounting to £1,000. The City Council, however, had a considerable credit balance in respect of these fees, which were not charged for revenue purposes, but only to cover the expense of supervision. By reason of the excessive fees charged the City Council had a credit balance more than sufficient to cover the liability which would be thrown on them by the adoption of the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. ATKINS moved that the following be added to the clause: "Provided, however, that nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to validate any fees charged prior to the 7th day of March, 1902, on the basis of floor area beyond one horizontal section of a building."

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	16
Majority against		...	5

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Atkins	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Gardiner
Mr. Hassell	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Hicks	Mr. Hastie
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Pigott	Mr. Hopkins
Mr. Stone	Mr. James
Mr. Thomas	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Yelverton	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Higham (*Teller*).	Mr. Purkiss
	Mr. Rason
	Mr. Reid
	Mr. Reside
	Mr. Wallace
	Mr. Gordon (*Teller*).

Amendment thus negatived.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

At 6·28, the SPEAKER left the Chair.
At 7·30, Chair resumed.

MARINE STORES BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Walter James), in moving the second reading, said: This is a Bill on similar lines to Acts of the same nature in the Eastern States; and the effect of it is to provide legislation for collectors of what the Bill calls, and what are generally known as, marine stores. The main object of it is really to provide for the licensing and registration of those who collect odds and ends; those, for instance, who go about the municipality collecting bottles, and who very often use

their position for the purpose of collecting other matters more useful than bottles. The Commissioner of Police has on more than on occasion drawn attention to the need of legislation of this nature, because it is found that there is no provision by which you can check an indiscriminate use of that calling; and it is very undesirable for people to use that calling for the purpose of getting entrance to yards, houses, and business premises, and not only obtaining possession of unconsidered trifles, but getting information which is very often used for committing burglary later on. This Bill is very largely founded on the Act of South Australia. Part I. provides for the licensing of collectors. A license has to be obtained from the Commissioner of Police, and is only to be granted to a person who is apparently over the age of 16 years; and by the operation of Clause 5, although the license on the face of it is given for use throughout the State, it is rendered necessary that the collector, when he moves from district to district, shall report to the officer in charge of the police station in that district his place of abode in that district. If he fails to report himself in that manner he becomes liable to a penalty. A collector is authorised when licensed, to collect marine stores, marine stores being defined in Clause 2 as "partly manufactured metal goods, second-hand anchors, cables, sails, old junk, rags, bones, bottles, and marine stores of every description, copper, iron, brass, lead, Muntz metal, scrap metal, broken metal, or defaced metal goods." Then he has a duty thrown upon him to keep his marine stores, when he has collected them, in the same state as they were in at the time they were collected for four days, unless in the meantime he sells them to a licensed dealer. It is provided that he shall wear a badge and shall, when required, show that badge. Clause 6 provides a punishment in case he should let out or hire his license to any other person, or sell or dispose of marine stores other than glass bottles or bones, to any person other than a licensed dealer. So far as bones or glass bottles are concerned, he is entitled to sell those to others than a licensed dealer, it being the recognised practice of collectors of glass bottles to sell them to the breweries or those who are using bottles, and so also it is a recognised practice of collectors when they obtain bones to sell them to those who are carrying on the business of bone-millers. Clause 7 is a clause the effect of which is to prevent any person who is not licensed acting as a collector. That, shortly speaking, is the effect of Part I., providing for the licensing of collectors, requiring that they shall sell whatever they collect to registered dealers with the exception of glass bottles and bones, which they are entitled to sell to whatever buyer offers himself, that being, generally speaking, a brewer or an aerated water manufacturer, or bone-miller. Part II. relates to dealers, and we provide there for a system of registration. They obtain their license, and the license has to refer to the premises. Clause 14 indicates, roughly speaking, the duty of the licensed dealer. He has to get exhibited his name in full, and to have the words "licensed dealer in marine stores" upon his premises. He has to keep his premises closed during the whole of Sundays and public holidays, and also between the hours of six in the afternoon every day, except Saturday and Sunday, and eight o'clock the following morning. He has also to keep his premises closed from two o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday until eight o'clock on the following Monday morning. Then he has to keep a record of any collector or person to whom he lets out any truck. He has also to keep a record in the form indicated in the schedule of all his dealings with marine stores; the purchase of them and the sales of them. He is required to produce it whenever requested. He is required also, by Sub-clause 8 of Clause 14, to keep all marine stores purchased or received by him without changing the form in which they were when so purchased, or disposing of the same, for a period of seven days. The object of that provision, by which we insist that the collector shall keep the marine stores for a certain number of days, and that the dealer when he purchases them shall do likewise, is to provide a simple method by which persons who have missed unconsidered trifles may have an opportunity of finding out where they are; and the provision should be a strong deterrent to the exercise of the proclivities too frequently exhibited by some bottle-

collectors. Clause 15 makes some provisions necessary for the more effective administration of the Act when dealing with certain offences. For instance, the dealer is not allowed to carry on business in any premises other than those licensed; he is required to produce to a justice of the peace or a police officer his license; he is not to lend or let on hire any truck except to a licensed collector; he is not to charge more than the maximum prescribed fee; he is not to receive any marine stores from any person under the age of 16, nor to receive them before 8 o'clock in the morning or after 6 o'clock in the evening, nor to employ in his business any person under the age of 18 years. Part III. is miscellaneous, and is really supplementary to Parts I. and II. Briefly, Part I. deals with collectors, the method of licensing, and the duties and obligations of the collector. Part II. deals with the same subject-matter as applied to dealers; and Part III. contains supplementary clauses which make the Bill more effective. For instance, Clause 25 provides that if any person offers to a dealer, by way of sale or exchange, any marine stores, and refuses or is unable to give a satisfactory account of himself or of the means by which he became possessed of such stores, or gives any false information, or there is any reason to suspect that such marine stores are stolen, then the dealer may give that person in charge. As I have previously mentioned, the need for this Bill has on more than on occasion been pointed out by the Commissioner of Police; and every member of this House has no doubt had practical experience of the need, or can no doubt easily, without experience, come to the conclusion that there is need for legislation that will exercise some control over those collectors. It is notorious that the calling of a bottle collector is frequently used for other than the ostensible reasons; and there are very grave suspicions leading to the inference that the bottle collector is often the forerunner of the burglar; so I move the second reading of this Bill as one which I hope will commend itself to the House, which is urged upon us by the Commissioner of Police, and which I believe members will realise is on the face of it a desirable measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

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

BRANDS BILL.

DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

Order read, for second reading of the Bill.

On motion by MR. BUTCHER (in charge of Bill), order discharged.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner): In moving the second reading of this Bill, I may fairly claim that the measure is the outcome of a discussion which took place during the consideration of last year's Estimates. Many of us then felt that there was urgent necessity for a reform in the administrative policy of the Government; and subsequently, when we closely pressed the point, the Premier (Mr. Leake) said the obstacle in the path was the Public Service Act. Some of us suggested that he should bring in an amendment to that Act; but he preferred the course of repealing the statute. When we new Ministers joined the Leake Administration, we found that many of the promises that had been made during the debate on last year's Estimates showed no favourable signs of redemption; and we then asked, why is it that the estimates of some of these departments practically remain as they were this time last year? and the answer was that the Public Service Act practically prevents our going in for any retrenchment or for any reorganisation. We contended amongst ourselves that it was the undoubted right of any Government to thoroughly review the public service of this State, to see if it was over-manned, whether the officers were underpaid or overpaid; and as we inquired into these matters, we became quite convinced of the fact that there were many things we could remedy and many things which it was our bounden duty to remedy. Therefore, we took steps

at once, and this, as I have explained before, is the reason why the Estimates are not already on the table of the House. We wanted to say to the House that at least as far as we were concerned there was an honest determination to meet the wishes of members in the question of reorganisation, and putting upon a better footing the public service of the State. We sent out notifications, and we now come down and ask the House in its wisdom to give us the power to carry out the retrenchments, if I may so term them, and the reorganisation to a successful issue by amending the Public Service Act. The lion in the path of any action, I may say, is contained in Section 14 of the present Public Service Act, and it is this:—

> No public servant whose pay is once determined by the Governor and approved by Parliament shall afterwards, whilst doing the same work, suffer any loss or reduction of pay, except as follows:—
> (*a.*) on abolition of office; or
> (*b.*) on removal; or
> (*c.*) by reduction by parliamentary vote of the amount proposed on the Annual Estimates; or
> (*d.*) on reduction affecting generally the public service recommended by the Governor and accepted by Parliament.

Members of the House can easily see what a bar that is to any reformation in the first place to get the office abolished. The work of the office might have decreased very considerably, but it was not within our power to decrease the pay for the office. The only option was to abolish it, or remove it, or a reduction by parliamentary vote as proposed in the Estimates. Members know what a reduction on the Parliamentary Estimates means. We would have to adopt some surreptitious means of getting the amount reduced. We should have to ask some friendly supporter of the Government to move that the item be reduced by the sum we desired. That is not a position in which a responsible Government for one moment should be placed. In the amendment it will be seen that Clause 3 of the Bill provides the following in its place:—

> Section 14 of the principal Act is amended by striking out subsection (*c*), and inserting in lieu thereof—(*c.*) By reduction appearing on the Annual Estimates submitted to Parliament.

So that now, if the House pass the Bill, the Government have power or are in a position to review the whole of the public service, bring down the Estimates here, and then have ample authority for any reduction they may make. It throws on the Government an additional responsibility to do this. In a big business like the State business, it is absolutely necessary that the Ministers in charge should not only look into their departments, but should absolutely understand how those departments are being worked; whether they are being worked economically; whether they are being worked with satisfaction to the public and to the State; and if such is not the case, and if they are paying too high for the work, under this clause we shall have an opportunity of coming to the House and saying that the work is only worth so much, and consequently we are only going to pay so much for it. It may be argued that this is an attempt to practically go back on the obligations to civil servants; but it is nothing of the kind. It is a desire, and I say it unhesitatingly, to see that the public of this State get some of the service and at least pay for that service on much the same principles as is paid by the commercial world; at the same time to offer to the public servants the same inducements that are offered by a commercial house. Clause 4 of the Bill refers particularly to leave. If members turn up Section 28 of the Act, they will find there stipulated the leave of absence and the annual leave:—

> (*a.*) For recreation for two weeks on full pay:
> (*b.*) The time for taking annual leave shall in each case be approved by the Minister, and the Minister may, for sickness or special necessity, grant extended leave, not exceeding two months, on any terms thought fit.
> (*c.*) With the written consent of the Minister, in each year annual leave for recreation may, when the convenience of the department is served thereby, be allowed to accumulate for not exceeding six weeks altogether.

Clause 4 provides that "in each year" shall be struck out. With regard to the leave, I have taken the trouble to look into the systems obtaining in the other States, and they are much the same as that obtaining here, with the exception that there officers get three weeks and we give two. In other States the Governments are very dubious in allow-

ing an accumulation of leave, and I think whilst we provide in Subsection (*c.*) of the original Act that the leave can accumulate not exceeding six weeks, in the other States as far as possible they make a man take advantage of his leave. We would be acting wisely in following that example here; because in a large service we find a man do work slovenly, and it is a very good thing to put another man in his place while he is on leave. There are occasions when men have been dishonest with public funds; and it is a very wise thing to insist there, too, that a man should take his annual leave in order that the books can be carefully inspected. This will give power, not of espionage or anything of that kind, but will bring the public service up to a better standard, and place the Ministers in a better position to know that the work of the State, which should be like the work in a commercial house, is carried out. Then we come to the question of long leave, and I say unhesitatingly that Section 29 of the present Act is absolutely ruinous to the State. It says:—

> Public servants shall be entitled to long service as under:—(*a.*) For six years continuous service, except during annual leave of absence, three months on full pay and three months on half pay. (*b.*) The time for taking long service leave shall, in each case be approved by the Governor, and the Governor may, for sickness or special necessity, grant extended long-service leave on such terms as may be thought fit.

When in Committee, it is my intention to give notice and to move an amendment to practically put the public servants on the same basis as the public servants are placed in New South Wales. In Victoria, after 20 years' service officers may be given a year's leave. I would like to point out that in this Bill it gives us no option. It says, "Public servants shall be entitled to long service-leave as under." In Victoria, after 20 years' service officers are given a year's leave, six months on full pay and six months on half pay. In New South Wales, after 20 years service an officer is given 12 months' leave on half salary, or six months on full salary. After 10 years' service an officer is entitled to six months' leave on half salary, or three months' leave on full salary. In the Commonwealth, after 20 years' service an officer is entitled to 12 months on half pay, or six months on full pay. We purpose to adopt practically the New South Wales system: that is, after 20 years' service, giving 12 months' leave on half salary, or six months' on full salary; and after 10 years' service, six months on half salary, or three months on full salary. The computations of service are practically provided for in Clause 5 of this Bill. Members will find in the Bill that we have made an alteration in regard to the holidays, and I think the general public of this State will welcome the suggestion that the holidays should be reduced. I think the trading public have been extremely long-suffering on the question of public holidays. Trade becomes disjointed in every possible way, and every possible occasion is seized on to so disjoint that trade. In the section as it now exists, members will find that the birthday of the Sovereign, Coronation Day, the Prince of Wales's birthday, the anniversary of the foundation of the colony, the anniversary of the settlement of Australia, Proclamation Day, and also all days that the Governor may appoint are gazetted as public holidays. There are already 12 holidays provided for in that sub-section, and in addition there are any other holidays the Governor may appoint as public holidays. We purpose reducing these, and limiting them to Anniversary Day, the birthday of the Sovereign, Foundation Day (the 1st of June), and Proclamation Day (the 21st of October). That is in addition, of course, to New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Eve, Easter Day, Christmas Day, and the 26th of December; so that this clause practically reduces the public holidays by three days, and I am sure everyone will acknowledge that is a reasonable thing.

MR. HOPKINS: Three, and all casuals.

THE TREASURER: Not all casuals, because power is given to the Governor under the Bill to gazette any public holiday. Clause 9 provides that a servant must be five years, instead of two as under the present Act, before he can become entitled to be placed on the permanent staff. These are practically the amending clauses so far as the present Bill is concerned. There have been two additional clauses added to this Bill, one of which is a repeal of the Bank Holidays Act, practically making the holidays we

provide the bank holidays in lieu of those in the other Act. The other clause is in regard to illness and suspension. Then I come to the question of the appointment of a board of inquiry under Section 34 of the principal Act. The Ministers who have striven to administer the Act conscientiously have found that no power is given here to practically dismiss a man for drunkenness or lapses such as that. We have had instances where a man has even gone into a Minister's office absolutely drunk, and has been put outside not only once, but on more than one occasion. According to the present Act, the Minister can only suspend that man, and, forsooth, the officer can demand and put the country to the expense of a board of inquiry!

MR. HOPKINS: To point out whether he was drunk.

THE TREASURER: Yes. No matter how glaring the misconduct has been, no matter how apparent it is, under the present Act a Minister can only suspend an officer, and then the officer has power to demand a board of inquiry, and can put the country to the expense of that board, although the conclusion is absolutely foregone. In that respect, power is practically given to the Governor to say whether the officer shall or shall not have a board of inquiry. Sections 32 and 33 of the old Civil Service Act of New South Wales, passed before the present Public Service Act, contain practically the same provision as we are now adopting:—

> If, in the opinion of the Minister or of any officer by him duly authorised to investigate any matters or accounts, any officer shall have committed any act which appears to him to justify suspension, such officer may be immediately suspended from his office pending a report, and another officer may be temporarily appointed to perform his duties: Provided that in the event of such suspension not being made by the Minister, the officer making such suspension shall immediately lay before the Minister a report stating his reasons for such suspension, and the Minister may either confirm the same or restore such officer to his office. If the Minister order or confirm the suspension of any officer, he shall report the same to the Governor, who, after calling on the officer to show cause or make explanation, may remove such suspension, or, according to the nature of the offence, dismiss such officer from the service, or reduce him to a lower class therein or to a lower salary within his class, or deprive him of such future annual increase as he would otherwise have been entitled to receive, or of any part thereof during any specified time, or punish him by a fine not exceeding fifty pounds: Provided always that the Governor, before deciding thereon, may direct the board or may appoint one or more persons to inquire into the matter. . . .

We do not want to put out of court a man who has an honest case for inquiry, but we do want to affirm that where glaring instances of misconduct in any Government department or Government force occur, a board of inquiry shall not be granted except with the approval of the Governor. I turn now to Clause 13, in respect of which the Acts of the various Australian States, while differing in their language, give expression to practically the same concrete effect. The clause reads:—

> Nothing in the principal Act, as from the commencement thereof, shall be construed or held to abrogate or restrict the right or power of the Crown, as it existed before the passing of the said Act, to dispense with the services of any person employed in the public service.

The object of that provision is that the Government may have the same power as is granted to the Government of other Australian States to combine departments, to concentrate the public service, and to dismiss officers. Section 58 of the New South Wales Public Service Act provides:—

> Nothing in this Act, or in the Civil Service Act of 1884, shall be construed or held to abrogate or restrict the right or power of the Crown as it existed before the passing of the said Civil Service Act, to dispense with the services of any person employed in the public service.

The Public Service Act of Victoria provides, by Section 121:—

> After the passing of this Act no officer in the public service shall be dismissed therefrom or suffer any other penalty in respect thereof except for the causes and in the manner set forth in this Act; but nothing herein contained shall be taken to prevent the board, with the consent of the Governor-in-Council, reducing the number of officers in any department or dispensing with the services of any officers, or amalgamating two or more departments.

The Commonwealth Public Service Act, which provides for the inspection of departments by the six or seven inspectors under the Public Service Commissioner, has much the same provision. Section 8, Subsection 6, provides:—

> If the services of any officers in excess in any department are not likely to be required

in any other department, the Governor General may call upon such officers to retire from the public service; and every such officer so called upon to retire shall retire accordingly.

I have now given the salient features of this amending Bill, for which I say—and I speak somewhat feelingly on the subject—there is ample necessity. In the short time since I joined the Ministry, I do not suppose any Minister has been more frequently brought into contact with heads of departments. I have met in the civil service men who have shown every desire to assist, and every sympathy with, the movement to put the service on a sound basis. I have also encountered men who have been brought up swathed in red-tape, and the difficulty of inducing those men to adopt up-to-date lines is almost insurmountable. During the consideration of last year's Estimates, the House practically insisted that the Government should take a firm stand, not altogether on retrenchment, but on the removal of anomalies which were plainly apparent to us when we were considering the Estimates. The present Government are now carrying out the desire of the House as expressed last session. This is a fairly prosperous time for Western Australia, and therefore this is the time to put things on a sound, solid basis, so that when we enter our cycle of bad times —I suppose we must do so, since other States have done it—we shall not have to seek a safe and satisfactory basis through retrenchment and wholesale dismissals. The desire of the Government is that the State should have a number of employees sufficient to carry out the duties of the State as they ought to be carried out—no more, no less. A system has grown up of yielding to all classes of demands, and creating all kinds of departments. We find that the tendency of the public service is such that if you make a new head, before you know where you are that new head has built a new department round himself. The aim of the present or of any future Administration must be to amalgamate departments as far as possible; to go, irrespective of the report of any public service commission, right through the departments to ascertain whether the officers employed are giving an honest return for the salaries which they are paid. Where Ministers find that an honest return is not being given, the necessary steps must be taken to put the public service on a thoroughly sound and thoroughly business-like footing. I venture to say that, whilst the task is an extremely unpleasant one, any Government entering on it can rely absolutely on a solid backing in this Chamber. The Government feel that it is a much wiser thing to spend £20,000 or £30,000 in public works than to waste the amount on unnecessary public servants. If by wise economy, without impairing the efficiency of the service, without discouraging public officers from doing their level best, we can reduce departmental administration to something like a business basis, we shall be doing good and lasting work for the State; and that work the amending Bill now before the House will give Ministers every opportunity of doing. Therefore I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of this Bill.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (Cue): I desire to congratulate the Government on their endeavour to grasp with a firm hand the very nasty nettle of public service administration. I wish, also, to compliment the Treasurer on his lucid explanation of the intentions of the Bill. I know the difficulty which exists: I myself have felt it keenly. The Leake Government, with at any rate earnest and good intentions, set out on the task of reform, but in their endeavours to deal with the civil service in a business-like fashion were hampered at every turn by the provisions of the existing Civil Service Act. The present Government have acted wisely, I consider—and not only wisely, but courageously—in endeavouring to deal with the question. My personal feeling—I am expressing merely my personal feeling—is that Ministers should have entirely their own way, and that for this particular Bill they should be solely responsible. I should not like them put in a position to say, after the Bill is passed, that the measure would have been effective but for some alteration insisted on by the House. At the same time, I wish to know whether the Government are satisfied that under the Bill they are taking sufficient power. Here is a difficulty which has not been explained by the Treasurer, and for which I can find no remedy in the Bill. There is in existence such a statute as the Superannuation Act.

THE TREASURER: The Government intend to bring in an amendment of that Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is exactly what I want to get at. The Leake Government did some combining of offices; we amalgamated three departments and reduced the staff materially; and we also increased the work of the departments. We were, however, met with this difficulty: when we desired to retrench an officer of a salary of £250 a year—I give this instance merely by way of illustration—we were bound by the Superannuation Act to grant that officer a pension of £125 a year, notwithstanding that he might be a comparatively young man, and in his own way a good official, although his services were not required. If this Bill be intended merely to give the Government power to dismiss and retrench, and if at the same time Ministers do not take the necessary power to do away with unnecessary superannuation, I really do not see how they can successfully pass through the ordeal of retrenching civil servants. For the position simply comes to this: in many cases it is impossible to reduce the cost of the civil service, because Ministers, although they may retrench one man or two or three men from the service, have to appoint another man; and by the time the new man has been appointed and two or three others have been got rid of by way of superannuation, the expenditure is not reduced one jot. Indeed, in some cases increase of expenditure accompanies reduction of the number of officers. I understood the Treasurer to make some remark that a Bill would be brought in to meet that difficulty. I rose merely to express the hope that the Government were taking sufficient power to deal with this question thoroughly, for there is no use in deceiving ourselves by putting on the statute-book a Bill which will prove abortive from the simple fact that the Superannuation Act already on the statute-book prevents the desires of the Government and of the House from being carried into effect. I hope the Government are satisfied that this Bill does not infringe the just rights of officers now in the service. It appears to me that on such matters as holidays, for instance, and in respect of other perquisites, officers appointed prior to the passing of this Bill must maintain their rights. I do not wish to make the Bill retrospective, and I assume that the rights of existing officers will remain. If that be so, we must not expect this Bill to work an immediate revolution. Its operation will be felt in years to come rather than at the present time; and the House must not expect that next year's Estimates will show the effect of the operation of the measure.

MR. JACOBY: We do expect that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I thought hon. members would expect it, and therefore I now wish to point out that the little experience I have had leads me to believe that this Bill will not have an immediate effect, and that no Bill we can pass will have an immediate effect. We cannot take away existing rights, and consequently the State will for a while have to suffer from the effects of rights existing in the civil service at the present time. Either we must be prepared to bear these things, or else we must be desirous of doing an injustice to the existing civil service. I do not think the desire of the House is to do injustice to anyone. I take it the Government are prepared to act fairly and justly by all the officers of the State. Consequently, I draw attention to the fact that while this Bill may operate in the most desirable fashion, its beneficial effects will not be felt perhaps for some years to come. Under the old Act we were placed in a very difficult position. Every officer who had been in the service for a certain number of years was entitled to come and ask for six months' leave of absence. If the officers qualified and entitled to claim under the clause in existence under the old Act had come and demanded it, as they had the power to do, half of the civil servants would have been away on holiday. Such a condition as that would be simply ruinous to good service and utterly destructive of organisation in government. For the reasons I have mentioned I hope the Government are taking all the powers possible for them to take and are getting all the control it is possible to have, without interfering with the officers' existing rights. And I hope they are prepared to bring in such an amendment of the Superannuation Act as will enable them when they dismiss an officer or a number of officers to do so without materially increasing, as

the present Act demands, the actual cost of working owing to superannuation fees. [Interjection by the TREASURER.] I am not proposing to take anything away. I want to be absolutely clear on this Bill. On this measure I am taking up perhaps a peculiar position. I do not intend to make a single alteration or a suggestion. I want simply to call attention to some of the difficulties which are present in my mind in reference to dealing with civil servants, and I want the Government on their own motion to take in this Bill all the powers that are necessary for the reform of the civil service. I do not know what other members may think, but I should like at any rate to see no material alterations in the Government proposals, so that when they have to deal with the question of the civil service they will not be able to turn round and say: "Well, we brought in a Bill, and if you had left it alone we would have had power." I want the Government to take the powers that are necessary. I wanted to point out one thing not provided for, and that is in relation to the existence of the Superannuation Act and its effect upon the expenses year after year. I congratulate the Government upon bringing in this Bill. I hope it will do all they suggest it will. I hope it contains the powers which the Treasurer seems to think are here, and that in justice to the service we shall have such a reform as will be completely satisfactory to this House and to the country.

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison): I asked the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) to move the adjournment of the debate, because I thought I should be unable to return to the House in time and there was a probability of a number of other members being absent too. I have, however, had an opportunity of looking through the Bill and of comparing it with the existing Public Service Act, and seeing the effect of the different amendments. And I must say that I see nothing in any of these amendments that anyone in this House should take exception to. Indeed, I think it is the duty of members on this (Opposition) side of the House to give the Government all the assistance in their power in any attempts to reform the civil service. There can be no doubt that any Government which may be in power has a very difficult work before it in bringing the civil service into a condition that will satisfy the needs of this country; and I should much regret if merely for party purposes or with an idea of impeding the action of the Government it could be said that members on this side had placed difficulties in the way of bringing the civil service into a more satisfactory condition. I am entirely at one with the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) in thinking that this Bill is a desirable one. I only hope that the Government, having gone so far, will see their way later on, if need arises as I imagine it will arise, to deal with the question of retirements from the civil service. I myself, some days ago, moved a formal motion calling for papers in the case of one officer who left the service after a few years in Government employment. He is, I am given to understand, in receipt of a pension of something like sixty or seventy pounds a year. Whatever may be the legal rights of the civil servants, to the outside public it does seem somewhat of an anomaly that a man who receives in the service similar pay to what he would be receiving were he engaged by a private employer should, if his office be abolished, be entitled to a pension, which is a consideration that no private employer would give.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is under the Superannuation Act.

MR. NANSON: Yes. That is why I join with the member for Cue in expressing a hope that it will be possible to amend the Superannuation Act in a manner that will not deal harshly with the civil servants, but in such a way as private employers deal with their servants. Anyone outside the Government service, who is in private employment, is always at the risk of losing his employment, and he makes what provision he can, accordingly. If there is one evil in Australia at the present time it is that many of our young men have no other ambition than that of getting a soft billet in the Government service. That condition of things will always continue if, when once a man enters the service, it is practically impossible to get rid of him without giving him a large sum down or a pension for the rest of his life. I have very much pleasure in

supporting the second reading of this Bill.

MR. W. ATKINS (Murray): I thoroughly indorse what has been said on this measure. Civil servants want to do very little, and in their spare time when work is more easy, to compete with outside men who earn their living from their business alone. I know there is a clause--I see the Premier laugh, he knows all about it—but it only says that they are not to do any work of the sort they are paid for by the Government, but that outside the Government time they can do any other. They can compete with any other class of men who are earning their living. I think something more should be done in that direction. If civil servants are as well paid as others, I think the least they can do is to carry out their own work and not interfere with outsiders. I am glad to see the Bill which has been introduced by the Treasurer. I do not know that I have followed the measure through, but if the Bill is as he says it is, it is going to do a great deal of good, which is badly wanted, because doubtless there is a great deal more money spent in the government of this country than there is any occasion for.

MR. R. HASTIE (Kanowna): Towards the end of last session we passed a measure which practically abolished the Civil Service Act altogether. And we did so very largely, if not entirely, at the special request of the Premier, who, at that time, assured us it was absolutely impossible for the Government to reform the service unless they got that Act abolished. When he put the matter before this House we agreed to abolish that Act, but the Upper House was not agreeable, and so things remain as they were. I see that this session the Treasurer believes that by this Bill the Government will be able to attain the object then desired, and up to the time that the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) spoke I was in hope that the Bill would enable the Government to act well. But, if I understand the member for Cue aright, the position really is this, that Parliament has not the power to take away certain rights which have been acquired by civil servants, and that if we pass this amending Bill the only people it will affect will be those who join the service from the present moment. That is the way I take his explanation. I would ask the Treasurer, in reply, to kindly explain the position. I think there is a clause in the present Act somewhat to the effect of Clause 13 in this Bill, providing that nothing in the Act shall prevent the Government from acting under certain circumstances. If it be so, surely the contention of the member for Cue is not correct; but if it be correct, then we are in this position, that practically we have to buy out all the acquired rights of the civil servants before we make an amendment. I hope the Treasurer will place the information before the House.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Walter James): I would like to explain to the House the relation between the Public Service Act and the Superannuation Act. The Superannuation Act has been in force, I think, since the year 1875. Under that Act, a public servant who has served the State for a certain number of years, from 10 to 30, is entitled to a pension. Ten years is the minimum period entitling a person to such a pension, 30 years being the period which entitles him to the highest pension on retirement. That is a right enjoyed by the public servants since 1875. For some years past most of the public have been under the impression that the old Superannuation Act ceased on the adoption of responsible government. The question really never cropped up, because for the last eight or ten years we have been enjoying such a period of prosperity that instead of our dealing with the question of retrenchment and retirements the service has been expanded. It is only now really that the pressure which that Act is likely to exert upon us will be felt. The question of amending that Act does not arise in connection with a Public Service Bill. They are quite distinct; and, as the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) pointed out, when you are dealing with retirements or the abolition of offices you have always to act with the knowledge before you that if you abolish an office or retire individuals, there are certain vested rights acquired under the Superannuation Act. For instance, if you abolish an office, the officer is entitled to a pension based on the assumption that he has served ten years longer than he actually has. In connection with my own department there are cases

in which I could perhaps do with fewer resident magistrates, but then they are men who have been several years in the service, and when you come to consider what you would save by making those retrenchments you will find it is very little. A small amount may be saved which really would not compensate for all the inconvenience caused. So far as my department is concerned, this does not apply nearly so acutely as in other departments. It was because we realised the need of it that we foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech a Bill dealing with the Superannuation Act; but that Bill is entirely distinct from the Public Service Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It controls this Bill.

THE PREMIER: It does control this Bill. We may perhaps go to this extent, that we may consider whether, in Committee, we can put in a clause providing that the Superannuation Act shall not apply to any future public servants appointed under this Bill. To deal with vested rights is to deal with a very difficult problem, which is treated differently in different States. There is no superannuation allowed under the Federal Public Service Act, for in it there is a system of insurance. Therefore I hope members will understand that we do not deal with the Superannuation Act in this Public Service Bill, because this is not the proper place to deal with the former measure. But when dealing with the Superannuation Act, members will be faced with the same difficulty, that there are these vested rights; and although it does seem unjust that a comparatively young man in the prime of health and vigour should, after 10 years' service, be entitled to a pension, yet I fear, or rather I hope, we shall be the last body in the State to repudiate an accrued right which the public servants enjoy.

MR. S. C. PIGOTT (West Kimberley): I, too, join with the member for Cue in congratulating the Treasurer on the able manner in which he has explained to the House the details of this Bill. I am quite sure the majority of members will approve of the measure; and I will go farther. I feel pretty certain that a great number of civil servants in this State will quite agree with the Bill, and will be very glad if it pass. From some speeches made to-night, I gather that in the opinion of some people, to be a civil servant, in Western Australia at any rate, means simply to hold an easy billet, to get good pay and probably a pension, and to have very little work to do. With that opinion I do not agree. I feel sure there must be many men in our civil service who are honest and loyal servants of this State; and it is on behalf of those men I stand up this evening. I think the Government are perfectly justified in bringing in this Bill, but at the same time I hope they will not in any way abuse the powers which will be conferred on them when the Bill passes; that they will always fully bear in mind the rights of all officers who have been and are loyal servants of this State. I can quite understand the many difficulties which up to the present have stood in the way of reforming the existing Act; and I think many of those difficulties are caused, not by the non-existence of loyal officers, but by the mode of promotion in the service. I think I am right in saying that hitherto promotion has been awarded on a basis of length of service. I am not conversant with the details; but if I am wrong, I hope I shall be corrected. That being so, I am quite convinced that there are in our service many capable men who have been blocked from rising to positions to which they are justly entitled, by the presence of officers who have been longer in the service but who are not capable of filling the posts to which they have attained by length of service only. In order to get good men in the service, I think we must offer some inducement over and above the inducements offered outside the service. I think it a mistake for us to believe we can get as good men in the service as a mercantile or other private firm can get on equal terms. We should always bear that fact in mind; because there is not the slightest doubt that any man who has been in the service for from 10 to 20 years, and has then to retire, is very heavily handicapped in the race for a livelihood in this country. I have to engage many men; and I have never yet sought to obtain the services of a man who has retired from the civil service, because I know that in nine cases out of ten his work has been purely mechanical work, and work which has

not given him a knowledge of general outside business. That is why I hope the Government will always bear in mind the rights and privileges to which our good civil servants are duly entitled. I have little to say with regard to the effects of the Bill except in relation to the question of leave mentioned by the Treasurer. I think he has not looked at that matter with as broad a mind as might be wished. He says he believes in the New South Wales system of long leave, which is not obtainable till a man has served 10 or 20 years. Well, we have under our control a very big tract of country; and I think those officers who are appointed to positions in the tropical parts of this State should not be expected to stay there 10 or 20 years before getting leave.

THE TREASURER: They get their annual leave.

MR. PIGOTT: Annual leave is in their cases useless. Three weeks' leave every 12 months, or at any time, to an officer stationed far in the tropics, is useless; because, if he accept such leave, it will have expired before he can get to Perth and back again.

THE TREASURER: It can accumulate to six weeks.

MR. PIGOTT: Well, six weeks would be hardly sufficient. The conditions of living in the far North are absolutely different from the conditions in which men live in the southern portions of the country. I think if this matter be taken into consideration, it can easily be satisfactorily arranged; and surely no member will object to some small amendment which will allow those men to be fairly treated.

THE TREASURER: The Imperial service has a special provision for men in tropical countries.

MR. PIGOTT: Yes; and that might be availed of. I shall certainly support this Bill, which I hope will pass its second reading without a single dissentient voice.

MR. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): I must join in congratulating the Government on the moderation of the measure before the House. I certainly anticipated something that would be rather too drastic, and that would go a little too far. Yet in the provisions of the present Bill I see very little to object to; in fact, I think with most hon. members we can safely say the Bill as introduced is fair to the public and at the same time to the public servant. I think it might have gone a very little farther; for instance, the question of classification must soon be dealt with, and provision for that might have been embodied in the Bill. I suppose the Government intend to make classification the subject of a measure brought in later in the session.

THE TREASURER: That course has been taken in all other countries where there is a public service board.

MR. DAGLISH: I can instance two States where the Public Service Bill has embodied the appointment of a board; and I think it would have been better had that been done in this case, so that with one discussion the public service might have been dealt with finally. I do not know, however, whether the Government will be prepared with such a proposal until the report of the Royal Commission on the public service is received.

THE PREMIER: That is the point. There will have to be a new Bill.

MR. DAGLISH: In regard to that, I was rather pleased with the Treasurer's remark that independently of the report of the Royal Commission, and without waiting for such report, he and I understand other Ministers are prepared to act once this measure is passed; and the questions naturally arose in my mind: then what is the use of the Royal Commission, if Ministers are prepared to act before it reports? Why keep it on? And might it not be possible to compound with that body, ask its members to resign, and allow the Government to carry out their own reforms in the public service? At present we have a commission that will cost a mint of money before its sittings are concluded. I notice it has a staff and a suite of offices, and is running up for payment by the Government a very large account for travelling expenses. I do not know how long its sittings will last, or whether it will deem it necessary to visit the north of this State as well as the goldfields; but at present its members are showing commendable energy, which unfortunately means a large expenditure on the part of the State; and I am very doubtful whether the result obtained from the work of the

commission will be anything like commensurate with the cost that body will entail. I would ask whether, if the Ministry are prepared to go into the departments to investigate them thoroughly, it is necessary that the Royal Commission also should continue an investigation which will not terminate till after this session, and which for all we know may not terminate before the end of next session. I would commend that suggestion to the careful consideration of the Government. There is another point we wish dealt with—the question referred to by the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott), the matter of promotion. That undoubtedly needs settlement before any new promotions are made in the service. Promotion has been a sore point with members of the State service ever since I have been here, and I do not know for how long before that. Very often the reason the Government do not get the very best service is because there is no inducement held out to those willing to give it; and the man who virtually does as little as he is permitted to do, as little as will enable him to retain his position, is very often by the mere fact of seniority, or by his having friends at the head of his department, enabled to keep his position in front of the man who may give much of his time outside office hours, and all his talents, to the service of the State. If the public service is to be made what it ought to be, we shall see patient merit get the reward without seeing it go often to the unworthy. The Government might go into the matter without waiting for the report of the Royal Commission, and see if there are not some means of giving promotion according to merit, and not on influence or family connections, because family connections often have more influence, and with political influence conspire to defeat merit. The words of the member for West Kimberley I can re-echo. From my experience, we have some splendid ability in the various departments; we have men who are actuated by a desire to do their best in the service. Many men have passed out of the service because they have seen no advantage in remaining longer while there is so little reward for earnest effort. Men have left not only the public service of this State, but of other States, because they have seen no scope for their abilities, and the inferior man naturally stays where there is permanency and where position is earned with little effort and very little brains. In every department there are really first-rate men. I have noticed in Victoria as well as here that there is the tendency which the Treasurer has spoken of; that as soon as an officer obtains a position, he wishes to increase his importance and his pay, and he endeavours to surround himself with a little staff of which he is the head. If there is to be retrenchment, we should recognise that those responsible for the over-manning of the service should be those on whom the axe should descend. It should not be on a man because he has been wrongfully engaged, but the punishment should be on the officer who has wrongfully engaged men for the purpose of increasing his own importance, and probably his own pay. When there is anything in the shape of retrenchment, it generally falls on those with the least influence and those who are lowest down, apart altogether from the question of competence. If we recognise that there is overcrowding in the service, and undoubtedly there is, we must likewise recognise that the men in high positions in the various departments are those particularly to blame. There has been from one end of the service to the other a lack of that sense of responsibility on the part of the heads, a lack of the sense that for every appointment recommended they are absolutely responsible to the State. Until we have this personal responsibility to the heads of departments brought thoroughly home in a striking manner, there is a danger that the same sort of thing will occur in the future. In Victoria, in 1878 they had what was known as Black Wednesday, when the Government suddenly dispensed with the services of a large number of public servants. The Government behaved as a man who had been on the "spree" behaves; they became suddenly virtuous and made a clean sweep, but almost the very day after the clean sweep had been made, the Government began making appointments of men equally as unnecessary as those dispensed with. That is a danger which may be met with here. Retrenchment may inflict hardship on a great number

of those who should not suffer, and then the same thing begins again until there is another public outcry, and then again there is another sudden reform. Then the Government start and go on in the same way. I hope the Government will make some effort, and for that reason will bring down on the heads of departments some idea of their responsibility in recommending appointments. The Government should bring the heads or sub-heads of departments to book if they have been responsible for making unnecessary appointments. Another matter that might have been attended to in the Bill is that of confidential reports. There is a provision that confidential reports should be made by heads of departments to Ministers, and the ridiculous thing about it is that every year these confidential reports have to be made by heads of departments about every individual in the department. I do not know if this course has ever been observed, but I have never heard of anything so absurd. If this course has been carried out, it might be worth while asking the Minister if I may see the confidential reports about myself. Before the Bill emerges from Committee we ought to see a clause inserted eliminating that old section from the Act. One farther point I should wish to draw attention to, the inexpediency of having little amending Bills brought forward. I think the House is entitled to ask that a measure of this sort should be consolidated, for it is difficult for members in discussing such a Bill to consider it with the principal Act or Acts to which it relates. And when the original Act is so small and so simple as the Public Service Act is, the whole thing might be consolidated, and members would have less trouble and greater advantage in discussing the various clauses, and there would be less liability on the part of members to omit clauses that may be deserving of criticism simply from the fact that we have separate Acts, and it is hard always at a moment's notice to rivet attention on a particular alteration.

MR. M. H. JACOBY (Swan): I shall be glad to give every assistance I can in the House or out of it towards remedying the condition that exists in the public service. I shall be pleased if anything highly satisfactory can be achieved. Unfortunately, under the system of Government, Ministers go and come, and they have not the opportunity for thoroughly reorganising a department, and such a thing cannot be done in a day or a month, or even six months. I doubt very much indeed if we are ever likely to get a thoroughly satisfactory civil service under these conditions. We have to get the best men under the circumstances, and if we have a good reforming Minister in charge of a department, in two or three years he may be replaced by another man who is not a reforming Minister and who may carry out a lot of weak acts. We have seen examples of that in the past, and it may occur again. Certainly we should do something by the Bill, and not tie the hands of those Ministers who are desirous of carrying out reform. I was somewhat surprised to hear the member for Cue express the opinion, and probably he could be backed up by statute, that any amendment we may make in the Act can only refer to those servants appointed after the coming into operation of this Bill. If that is the case, I am exceedingly disappointed. If the Superannuation Act stands in the way, an opportunity should be given to the House to review that Act, and whilst maintaining a full measure of justice to the officers appointed under that Act we should do something to remove the anomalies.

THE TREASURER: I will have the Bill down before the session closes.

MR. JACOBY: I am glad to hear that, because it is ridiculous that young fellows should be seen walking about the streets of Perth, with full years of capacity in front of them, who are drawing pensions from the Government.

THE PREMIER: All the work is in front of them. They will never overtake it.

MR. JACOBY: I hardly think the plea of justice could be raised altogether. I do not think it would be an injustice if the State asked that there should be some amount of work done, some years of service put in, before an officer could receive a pension. It seems ridiculous that an officer with a few years of service should be allowed to retire on a pension. I wish to indorse the remarks which have fallen from the member for Subiaco regarding the Royal Commission. I think the best Royal Commission we could have is the Government of the present day. I

think the Government have more capacity than any Royal Commission that could be appointed. We have full evidence that there is a strong desire on the part of the Government to reform the civil service, and I certainly would far sooner place my trust in the Government than in any Royal Commission. The members of the Royal Commission now sitting are civil servants who must look at the matter from the point of view of a civil servant. If the views of the member for Subiaco were carried into effect, the labours of the Royal Commission could be brought summarily to a close, and I should be glad to see that done. I have much pleasure in congratulating the Treasurer on dealing with this matter so effectually, and on the strong desire expressed of carrying out some much-needed reforms.

THE TREASURER (in reply): I desire to thank members of the House for the manner in which they have received this Bill, and the evident desire to give the Government every assistance to enable them to satisfactorily grapple with what I think we believe to be necessary, and that is not altogether a reform of the civil service, but trying to put the civil service on a just and fair basis. Probably in my opening remarks I did not do that credit which I might have done to a large number of the civil servants with whom I am brought in contact. I am quite satisfied that the service contains men of equal if not greater ability than can be found in many of the large institutions outside. I am also satisfied, as the member for West Kimberley said, that there are men in the service who will give an honest service and a loyal service if the opportunity is offered. We possibly are to blame in an indirect way, many of us, for some of the appointments. There is too much readiness on the part of members of Parliament to bring political influence to bear on appointments in the public service. That possibly accounts for a lot of the appointments made in days gone by which to-day can be viewed as very unsatisfactory indeed. Some of the suggestions made are well worthy of consideration. The Government desire only to bring in a fair measure; not a measure which will rob men of their rights in any particular, but a measure which will enable us, and cast on us a responsibility—that is one of the things we must recognise—to see that the public service is carried on as economically and yet as faithfully as we can possibly have it carried on. It is true—members have been good enough to say so—that we are doing our best to effect reforms. It must not be forgotten that members of Parliament who as Ministers take charge of departments are after all laymen, and that while some of us may possess the qualifications indispensable for reform in detail work, others of us may not possess those qualifications. Then, too, the life of a Ministry is occasionally transient: whilst Ministers may have a substantial majority to-day, the very reverse may obtain to-morrow. Therefore, it is probably wise to appoint experts to go through the departments. If Ministers, taking a firm stand, encounter, as we encounter now, inside the service a good deal of opposition to the policy of reform, then if the Civil Service Commission indorse the action Ministers propose to take, their position is made stronger and much more satisfactory in the eyes not only of Parliament but of the country. That is the satisfaction to be derived from having things dealt with by experts. The Civil Service Association, I may say, is perfectly satisfied that by this Bill Ministers want to do only what is right and fair; and the association has practically agreed, without any asking from the Government, to the provisions of the measure. Consequently, we feel that we are putting a just and fair measure before the House and the people for indorsement. We want to take away no rights; but, on the other hand, we do not desire that imaginary rights should exist. We wish to put matters on a firm basis, if possible. I have been looking into the question of the Superannuation Act. I have obtained the corresponding measures in force in all the other Australian States, and am studying them with a view to discovering the best solution of the difficulty which this, like every other country, has to face. Victoria is at present paying something like £343,000 a year under its Superannuation Act, and since the inception of the operation of that Act the Victorian people, I believe, have paid under it £5,900,000. We want to guard against any similar state of things arising

here. Every new State has had to guard against that contingency. In guarding against it, however, we are involved in other great questions, such as that of compulsory insurance, which demand more thought than one is able to give them while carrying out his departmental duties and endeavouring to initiate reforms. I shall, however, endeavour to submit to the House before the session closes a measure which will, at any rate, embody the best I can cull in connection with the subject. My endeavour will be to guard Western Australia against incurring heavy needless expense, and against provisions unnecessarily clogging administrative acts demanded by the interests of the service and the State as a whole.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

PUBLIC WORKS BILL.

RECOMMITTAL.

On motion by the MINISTER FOR WORKS, Bill recommitted for amendments.

MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the definition of "Crown land" be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"Crown lands means and includes all land of the Crown whether dedicated to any public purpose or not, except land granted or agreed to be granted in fee simple, or held or occupied under the Crown by lease or license, or for any other estate or interest." The object of the amendment was to preserve existing rights.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that in the definition of public reserve all words after "not," line 4, be struck out. This amendment was necessary in order that the public interest in parks and permanent reserves under the Permanent Reserves Act might still remain.

Put and passed.

Clause 5—Minister for Works:

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that all words after "Minister for Works," line 2, be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu: "who shall be charged with the administration of this Act, and whose office shall be one of the principal executive offices of the Government under the Constitution Act." This amendment was necessary, as it was not intended that the Minister for Works should have full control of every Government work.

Put and passed.

Clause 8—Annual Estimates:

MR. ATKINS moved that the following be added as Sub-clause 4:—

> All public works, the estimated value of which is over Three hundred pounds, shall be put up for public competition, and when tenders are returned for such work the Public Works Department, if they so choose, shall have the right to do this work by departmental day labour, but the cost must not be more for completing the work than the amount of the lowest tender for the said work.

Under recent Administrations much public money had been wasted by the system of Government day labour. The report of the Coolgardie Water Scheme Royal Commission proved that from £150,000 to £200,000 had been wasted on buildings and pipe track alone. Wherever parallel cases of private and Government work were found, the Government work proved the more costly. The reply of the advocates of Government day labour in such circumstances was always that the particular case was exceptional, and that day labour in other cases was all right. The recently constructed Menzies - Leonora railway afforded a good opportunity for instituting a comparison. Under the Government day-labour system the cost of constructing the Menzies-Leonora line, irrespective of station buildings and other outside works, was £249,922. A firm of contractors, Messrs. Smith & Timms, had offered to build the line on the same basis, but not supplying rails and fastenings, likewise not providing water supply, for £24,000, *plus* the traffic receipts.

MR. HOPKINS: Yes; the contractors would have got their price out of the people.

MR. ATKINS: The profit from traffic earned by the Government during construction amounted to £34,624. Not reckoning this, but allowing £91,200 for rails and fastenings and £20,000 for water supply, it appeared that Messrs. Smith & Timms offered to do for £24,000 what cost the Government £138,722. Smith & Timms offered practically to do the work for £58,624 (with the profit from traffic), thus leaving a debit balance

against the Government day labour of £80,098. He was taking the traffic on the same basis as the Government had. But the State revenue had benefited by profit on traffic run during the 18 months that the line was under construction, so the State did not actually lose that £34,624; and deducting that amount from the £80,098, the loss to the country through not allowing Smith & Timms to do that work was £45,474. These figures were based on the Government's own figures. If that amount was lost to the State on one railway, what had been lost on many other public works in the country? Wherever there was an instance, it came out just in the same way. The firm with which he had been associated were doing an improvement to a jetty at Derby. The Government, previously to the firm's commencing the improvement to the jetty, had begun starting a water supply, which was to cost £1,500. A short time after the firm started, there was such a holy mess of this Government work that the engineer in charge said, "We have spent £1,500 on this, and have got little more than half finished. Don't you think you could manage to finish it cheaper than we are doing it at?" Their firm estimated that they could do the work for £307 or £308. The Derby people said, "You must not give it to Atkins & Law because it is not fair. Let us have a chance." The consequence was that it was put up to public competition. The specification was altered a little, one or two things being deducted. Tenders were called for, and his firm got the job for £297, or something like that. They finished it, and he obtained £35 profit out of it. Government day labour was expensive, and there was any amount of money lost by the country year after year, owing to that way of carrying out work. The Government rated men according to their class, and not according to their work. There was no reason why a man should do his best in the Government service, because he had to keep in the same class as the worst man, or else he would be talked about. Good men said the same thing. They said that they gave their good services to make up for the bad ones. The way in which the work of the Coolgardie Water Scheme was done was a crying disgrace, the stroke of the men being shameful. Bricklaying, which should cost about 7s., 8s., or 9s. per cubic yard, cost 17s. per cubic yard. Money had been wasted hand over hand on the Fremantle Harbour Works. It was said that it was no good to use machinery for boring, and they bored by hand. Supervising in some of the places on the Coolgardie Water Scheme cost 17 per cent. of the charge for the work done. At Midland Junction at one time there were more supervisors than workers. If we had an estimate of the cost it would be found that the job could be done for 30 per cent. less than anything the Government could come near. The amendment ought to be carried for the good of the country.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Although one might sympathise with the object of the member for the Murray (Mr. Atkins), he hoped the hon. member would not press the amendment, or that, even if he did, the Committee would not agree to it; because in the first place it was far too hard-and-fast a line, and in the second place it would defeat the very object he himself had in view. The motion set out, "All public works, the estimated value of which is over £300, shall be put up for public competition." Accordingly the department were to call for tenders, and after receiving these, could elect to do the work departmentally. That would be wrong; and a hard-and-fast rule of any kind would be impracticable. Some works must be done departmentally; for if done by contract they would cost twice or thrice as much. These were works which might be described as of a "humbugging" nature, which no contractor would undertake except at prohibitive rates, such as repairs and alterations to a hospital ward, where the work must be done intermittently, with the least inconvenience to patients. As to the Menzies-Leonora railway, a much better case could be made out for the department than had been stated by the hon. member (Mr. Atkins). The delays to which the department had been subjected were largely responsible for the increased cost; and though contractors usually quoted low prices for railway construction, they did so with the belief and determination that they would recoup themselves by receipts for traffic hauled over the line,

thus making those for whose benefit the line was supposed to be built pay the difference between the amount of tender and the fair price. The hon. member, in estimating the profit the Government had derived from working that line, had assumed the same amount would be the contractor's profit, forgetting that the contractor would have charged much higher rates than the Government.

MR. JACOBY: The Government should regulate that.

MR. ATKINS: In every railway specifition a clause provided that the Minister should fix the rates for any traffic to be carried by the contractor.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: True; but in the past, railway contractors had made large sums out of traffic over lines in course of construction. [MR. ATKINS: The fault of the Government.] The Government were always alleged to be in the wrong, whatever happened; but the allegation was difficult to prove. Regarding the Midland workshops, whatever might have been the fact in the past, the cost of the work done now would compare favourably with any contractor's prices. Without entering into the merits of contract *versus* departmental day labour, he might say that even if the hon. member's amendment would attain the object sought, this Bill was no place for it. If members desired all public works to be done by contract, naught else was required but a resolution of the House to that effect; and the amendment, being too hard-and-fast, would be absolutely unworkable.

MR. ATKINS: The amendment did not absolutely declare that work should be done by contract and not by day labour, but that the cheaper system should in each case be adopted.

THE PREMIER: Suppose a contractor put in a £500 tender and the department maintained that the work could be done cheaper by day labour, and it ultimately cost £1,000, what would happen?

MR. JACOBY: Sack the engineer.

MR. ATKINS: Then if Ministers were honourable men, they would admit the facts, and would not again try day labour.

MR. HOLMAN: How would the hon. member allow for extras?

MR. ATKINS: That was not the subject of discussion. The figures as to the Menzies-Leonora railway were taken from those recently furnished to the House by the department, and he had compared them with those of Smith and Timms, who had offered to build the line and maintain it after completion. By every specification the Government had power to fix fares and freights to be charged by the contractor for a new railway, and the Government were to blame for not using such power, which had not been exercised either on the Southern Cross line or in Wilkie's case, where the contractors charged what they liked. Besides, on the Menzies-Leonora line the Government charged rates quite as high as those of the contractors.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

MR. ATKINS: And did not carry the traffic too satisfactorily. The amendment gave the option of doing the work by contract or by day labour.

MR. HOPKINS: The amendment was too far-reaching. It commenced, "All public works." By the definition, this would include any railway. The last speaker had referred to Smith and Timms. Not long since the John Davies Inquiry Board had reported that Smith and Timms purchased 30 hopper wagons from the Government, which the Government repurchased. Atkins and Law would have allowed for hire of the wagons £3,756, the Government charge for hire; but Smith and Timms bought the wagons, used them as long as required, and then returned to the Government the £3,756 worth of rolling-stock, and paid for its use a total of £375. That was a glorious instance of the advantage of dealing with Smith and Timms. Moreover, rates charged by the department would be fixed, while the contractor's rates would fluctuate, being as high as could be obtained. Surely none would advocate letting by contract £500 worth of work on an open railway. Consider the extras. The same would apply to hospitals, drainage, and other urgent works. The amendment would be useful only so far as it promoted discussion; for all these objections rendered it impracticable. The system would not work at all. It would place obstacles in the way of the public works of the country being carried out and would hamper the work of the department. It would be well if the hon.

member withdrew the amendment and brought the matter up later on for discussion.

MR. DAGLISH: The amendment was out of place altogether, and carried absurdity on the face of it. The member for the Murray (Mr. Atkins) was not an impartial judge in this matter. The proposal was impracticable because there were many works which would cost over £300 which had to be carried out immediately, there being no time to call for tenders. If contractors as a whole thought there was a probability of the Government carrying out a work by day labour, the Government would not get fair and honest tenders sent in: they would get "cooked" tenders. The Government would be asked to carry out the work at a price that no contractor would seriously think of carrying it out for. If it were the recognised policy of the Works Department to carry out works under the day-labour system, the contractors would be willing to take a certain amount of risk for the purpose of having another slap at the day-labour system. By admissions of the member for the Murray there were tricks in the contracting trade as in every other trade. Neither day labour nor contract work was a panacea. Neither was perfect; but in both cases the best work was obtained according to the administration. If day labour was properly administered it was a good system, and if contract work was properly carried out it likewise was good, always providing there was proper supervision and fair wages were paid to the labouring man. A great deal had been heard about the Coolgardie Water Scheme and the failure of the day-labour system there. The same arguments could be used against the contract system as administered by Mr. Hodgson as could be used against the day-labour system as administered by that officer. If there was efficiency of administration, splendid results could be obtained from the day-labour system and from contract work. He would vote against the amendment.

MR. GORDON: It was hardly possible to believe that the member for the Murray was in earnest. This was a deep-laid scheme of some wily politicians to trap the Government into giving expression of opinion about day labour *versus* contract work; but the Government did not seem to fall into the trap.

MR. QUINLAN: It appeared that, though favouring the amendment, it would be somewhat difficult to carry into effect. He would like to see the words after "competition" in the second line omitted, so that the Government could carry out such works as repairs which would cost up to £500 without calling for tenders. There had been great loss in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme and the Fremantle Harbour Works, in the carrying out of which day labour was employed. The late Engineer-in-Chief was so thoroughly disgusted by the way in which the country had been robbed, that just before his untimely death he stated that he was opposed to the continuation of the day-labour-system. The Government were not to be blamed, because it had been the custom to carry out the majority of the works by day labour. The ills from which we had suffered in the past should now be terminated. It was to be hoped that if the Committee were not disposed to adopt the amendment, even in a modified form, the member for the Murray would move a substantive motion, as suggested by the Premier. The member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) had referred to Messrs. Smith and Timms, but surely that firm did not constitute a representative example of all the contractors in the State. Government contracts might contain a minimum wage clause, and that should satisfy even the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), who, in common with certain other members, was known to be pledged to the day-labour system. If the State were taken in by contractors, the fault lay with the Minister or the Minister's advisers. It had been stated that in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme a supervisor at £1 a day was engaged in overlooking three or four men.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That sort of thing did not obtain now.

MR. QUINLAN: Day labour and an excessive civil service were responsible for the heavy taxation under which the country laboured.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Such a big question as that involved in this amendment should not be introduced in a discussion of the Public Works Bill, but should be brought up by special motion.

While in favour of carrying out large works by contract, he did not admit that the contract system could be advantageously introduced at this stage of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. To raise the question of contract *versus* day labour in this connection was hardly fair, since the supporters of the latter system had not come prepared for controversy. Opponents of the contract system might adduce, for example, the case of the Niagara dam, which work was let by contract for £24,000, but eventually cost £66,000. The adoption of the amendment might result in the unfairness of contractors being asked to tender for a work, and the Works Department doing that work by day labour if the amounts of tenders were considered too high.

MR. NANSON: That could be done now.

MR. STONE: Such was the system adopted in Victoria.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: In such circumstances, contractors might refuse to tender. Moreover, an engineer desirous of doing work by day labour could easily frame his specification in such a way as to compel the contractor to put in a tender at a big price, whereas the engineer would do the work much more cheaply in his own fashion. Perhaps the member for the Murray would withdraw the amendment and bring the matter forward by a substantive motion.

MR. NANSON: A great deal had been said about the impracticability of the amendment, but careful perusal showed that it merely affirmed the desirable principle that all public works estimated to cost over £300 should be submitted to public competition. The clause did not bind the Government to accept an unsatisfactory tender, but it did seek to bind the Government by statute to the principle stated. An overwhelming body of evidence existed to prove that public works carried out by day labour cost the country a great deal more than they would cost if carried out under contract. The report of the Royal Commission on the Coolgardie Water Scheme showed that the work of excavating the pipe track was 3s. per cubic yard, whereas under contract the work might have been done for 1s. 6d. per cubic yard.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was due not to the day-labour system, but to faulty management. The cost was now considerably less—some of it less than 1s. 6d., some of it rather more.

MR. NANSON: The member for the Murray might be content to withdraw his motion if the Government gave an undertaking as to their policy in the matter. The duty did not necessarily devolve on a private member of bringing up the question of day labour *versus* contract. The Government were shirking responsibility if they waited to hear the opinion of the House and then decided to do what the House thought right. Any Government worthy of the name would, in a matter involving hundreds of thousands of pounds, involving our whole public works policy, pronounce straight out in favour of either the contract or the day-labour system. Such honesty of conviction and of purpose would commend the Government to the House and the country; but an Administration destitute of working conviction ready to be put into practice was unworthy of the confidence of either the House or the people. It was the duty of those who believed in contract labour to support the amendment of the member for the Murray. The Minister for Works had pointed out that in the case of such works as repairs to a hospital, the conditions of carrying on the work were such that it would be much more expensive for a contractor to do it than for the Government to do it by day labour. Surely, however, no one would be a better judge of those circumstances than the contractors themselves, who were practical men, and he took it that, if they saw the work was of such a nature that they could only tender at what would be an excessive price, they would refrain from tendering.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There would be something in the shape of extras.

MR. NANSON: Even if they tendered, the matter would be left with the Government, and the Government or permanent official should be able to judge whether it was advisable to accept the tender or not.

MR. HASTIE: Up to the time the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) spoke, members had candidly tried to discuss this subject on its merits, but the leader of the Opposition came in at the last moment and tried to make this a

party question. [MR. JACOBY: No.] The hon. member certainly did so. The hon. member had said that this motion was only a direction to the Public Works Department to consider whether they should let the work by contract; but it was really a peremptory one and left the department no option whatever. In calling for tenders no person bound himself to accept the lowest tender. In several cases reliable men connected with the department would say that the lowest tender was not always satisfactory, and therefore it should not be accepted. The leader of the Opposition assumed that himself, because he said the public works officials would be able to say whether a tender was satisfactory or not. If they were, what was the use of this motion? Another question, which had not entered into the consideration of the House, was a very important one, and that was that price was not everything, but time was always a great element in a contract. The motion made no provision at all with regard to time. Sometimes if work could be done more quickly, it was more satisfactory to the country. Members seemed to assume that all work done by Government must necessarily be more expensive, and that all work done by contractors was always satisfactory. He had become acquainted with a good number of contractors in this country, many of whom had performed contracts under the supervision of the late Engineer-in-Chief, and all of those whom he had met had grumbled very strongly at the Engineer-in-Chief being an unfair taskmaster, being too greedy for the Government. They were always declaring that he unduly bore them down in their extras, and that the system of contracting hitherto in vogue in this State was completely unsatisfactory; yet members pointed out how contractors apparently had got the better of the Government. The member for the Murray (Mr. Atkins) wished that he himself and his brother contractors might have an opportunity of fooling the Government, or, in other words, getting the better of them. A great deal had been said to show why this question should not come into the Bill at the present time, but that members should have the opportunity of discussing it in a fair and square manner. He asked the hon. member to consider whether, when bringing forward a motion at a future time, he would not alter this to a very considerable extent from the form in which it appeared on the Notice Paper. It was absolutely absurd to suppose that everything should be let by tender under all circumstances, if the sum was above a certain amount. It had been stated by the hon. member and by the member for Greenough (Mr. Stone) that this was in force in Victoria, but until he actually saw it in print he would firmly believe that those gentlemen had been mistaken. He hoped the member for the Murray would not force the matter to a division. The Bill was quite long enough without an addition to it.

MR. JACOBY moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. ATKINS: If there was one greater mistake made about time than another, it was in relation to railways. The Goomalling railway was supposed to be taken up by the Government because there was not time enough to call for tenders to get it done for the next season's crops. They did not get it done, however, in time for the next season's crops, or for the crops of the following season. So it was in regard to the Menzies line. If a contractor had got the work, he would have done it in a great deal less time. There was now in all specifications a clause providing that there should be no compensation to the contractor in consequence of rails not being delivered. Nothing was given him but an extension of time; while the department, if constructing a line, must pay its idle staff waiting for such material. The amendment sought not to bind the Government to contract work, but to provide that the department need not do work expensively when it could be done cheaply. Adopt the cheaper method, whether by contract or day labour; but the day labour he had seen in this State would disgrace any country, and the fault lay, not in the management merely, but in the men, who did not do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

MR. HOPKINS: Was not that the fault of the supervisors?

MR. ATKINS: It was the fault of all, from top to bottom. He believed Sir

John Forrest had, for political purposes, introduced day labour to this State; and the late Engineer-in-Chief had told him (Mr. Atkins) that it was cheaper and better to do work by contract, but that he had been told to do it by day labour, and consequently he obeyed orders.

MR. HOPKINS: That officer's reports did not bear out the statement.

MR. ATKINS: Mr. O'Connor had told him that when work could be done by contract, the contract system was much cheaper than day labour; and that was the experience of the whole world. In Government day labour, the best men had to come down to the level of the worst, instead of the man who did most work getting the most money.

MR. HOPKINS: The trouble was to discriminate.

MR. ATKINS: Then let the contractor be responsible for discriminating. Two years ago, his firm had petitioned the Government for a minimum wage in contracts; the Contractors' Association had done likewise; therefore contractors could not be accused of sweating. [MR. HOPKINS: None had accused them.] With a minimum wage, all contractors were on the same basis, a basis with which honest contractors were satisfied; and the contractor with the best workmen got ahead of his competitors.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Withdraw the amendment, and give notice of motion for next Wednesday.

MR. ATKINS: How would that avail? [MR. HOPKINS: Divide.] He could not see where the opposition to the amendment came in, if members wished to save money to the country. Some members wished to make a party question of day labour *versus* contract work.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member would do well to withdraw his amendment. The symmetry of the Bill would, to a certain extent, be destroyed if the amendment were inserted. The measure dealt principally with the question of the resumption of land for public works. The proposal of the hon. member could be dealt with better by a substantive motion, and no doubt more support would be received if the proposal was put forward in that way.

MR. BUTCHER: While in accord with the member for the Murray in his desire to put a stop to the day-labour system as far as possible, the amendment, if passed, would not effect the object sought to be attained. It would be far better if the hon. member withdrew the amendment, and submitted the proposal in the form of a substantive motion, when he would be better able to obtain the feeling of the House on the subject. A majority of members, he believed, were of opinion that it would be of advantage to the State if all work were done under the contract system. The fact of the representatives of labour supporting the day-labour system showed that it was a "soft game," or they would not approve of it. He was a supporter of the contract system, and opposed to day-labour work.

MR. NANSON: Earlier in the evening the Opposition gave the Government their fullest and frankest support in a measure which was aimed at reforming the civil service of the country; and now the Opposition were endeavouring to give the Government equal support in securing economical administration in connection with the public works of the country. In one case what the Opposition did was absolutely proper, according to the idea of the Labour leader; but when the Opposition tried to do precisely the same thing, and supported the principle of contract labour against day labour, members were taunted with acting from party motives. This taunt was beginning to get a little bit stale. No Opposition had been more patriotic in their treatment of the great questions that came before Parliament than the present Opposition had been. If a question was in the interests of the country it received support. The Harbour Trust Bill, the Public Service Amendment Bill, had received the support of the Opposition, and so now was the Public Works Bill receiving support. The object of the amendment was to endeavour to obtain from the Government a statement of their position. Seeing that great loss had been incurred to the country through the day-labour system, the Opposition had hoped that the Government would make a definite statement as to what their policy was in regard to day labour *versus* contract work. The Colonial Secretary and the Minister for Works had urged that an amendment of this nature was out of place in a Public Works Bill; and seeing that the

Government had undertaken to allow an opportunity of discussing the principle not later than Wednesday next, the member for the Murray would, perhaps, be well advised in withdrawing the amendment, feeling assured, as well he might, that he had done the State good service in ventilating the question.

MR. ATKINS thanked the Colonial Secretary for the tone of his remarks. He asked leave to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

On formal motions by the MINISTER FOR WORKS, ordered: That Clause 10 be struck out (as unnecessary); that in Clause 12, line 4, "(1)" be inserted after "power," and that in line 5 "also the" be struck out, and "(2.) subject to the provisions of 'The Permanent Reserves Act, 1899,'" inserted in lieu; that in Clause 20, lines 1 and 2, "Crown land or a reserve" be struck out, and "a public reserve" inserted in lieu; that in line 4, "withdraw the land from any lease or license, and" be struck out, and that in line 5 "to the like extent" be struck out; that in Clause 96, lines 11 and 12, "the penalties provided in section one hundred and thirty-four" be struck out, and "a penalty not exceeding £10, and if the obstacle is removed by the local authorities the cost of removal may also be recovered by the local authorities from the occupier or owner in any court of competent jurisdiction" inserted in lieu; also that in Clause 99, lines 1 and 2, "and stream up to high-water mark, or in the case of non-tidal rivers," be struck out, and that before "river," line 1, "tidal" be inserted.

Bill reported with farther amendments.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 18th September, 1902.

	PAGE
Questions: Railway Materials, Cost, etc.	1162
Railway Trucks, Delays	1163
Schools of Mines, Goldfields	1163
Kalgoorlie Local Express Trains	1163
Return ordered: Timbers for Railway Use ...	1163
Bills: City of Perth Building Fees Validation, third reading	1163
Marine Stores, third reading	1163
Railways Acts Amendment, recommittal, reported	1164
Fremantle Harbour Trust, in Committee, progress	1169
Ministerial Statement (Harbour Trust Bill), as to divisions	1176

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS: 1, Return of expenditure in connection with the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Branch (moved for by Mr. McDonald).

Ordered: To lie on the table.

QUESTIONS (3)—RAILWAY MATERIALS, COST, ETC.

MR. RESIDE asked the Minister for Railways: Whether it is a fact that the Railway Department are importing "Stone's Bronze Metal" at a cost of £167 per ton, when as good an article can be manufactured in Fremantle at £75 per ton.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: For the year ended 30th June, 1902, Stone's bronze was purchased as follows:—

Tons	Cwt.		Price per ton. £	s.	d.
6	0	at	147	18	6
1	0	at	145	19	9
2	0	at	170	15	0
15	15	at	129	4	0
0	5	at	157	10	0

It is questionable if as good an article could be manufactured in Fremantle at £75 per ton, but the subject will be fully inquired into.

MR. RESIDE also asked: 1, Who is responsible for the prices being paid for Class F locomotive engines? 2, Whether there is not a large number of engines which could be put on traffic with the expenditure of a comparatively small sum of money per engine.