

Legislative Assembly,*Thursday, 8th August, 1912.*

	PAGE.
Questions: Unemployed at Kalgoorlie ..	949
Railway improvements, overhead bridges ..	949
Trans-Australian Railway, Perth to Kalgoorlie route ..	949
Leave of Absence ..	949
Bills: Traffic, 1A. ..	949
Merredin-Coolgardie Railway, 1A. ..	949
Industrial Arbitration, 2A. ..	952
Pearling, 2A. ..	960
Message: Wickepin-Merredin Railway select committees, Power to confer ..	949
Motion: Railway construction, contracts to expedite ..	964

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

QUESTION—UNEMPLOYED AT KALGOORLIE.

Mr. GREEN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that, notwithstanding the arrangements made by the present Government for the relief of the unemployed in Kalgoorlie, there are still a number of workers there who are in urgent need of employment? 2, Does he intend to proceed with further work for their relief? 3, If so, when?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Some necessary works were recently put in hand at Kalgoorlie, and these absorbed a number of men, who had been for some time out of work, but nothing in the nature of relief work has been undertaken. 2, Parliament will be asked to authorise further work within the goldfields area which will absorb a number of men. 3, Notice in this direction was given yesterday.

QUESTION—RAILWAY IMPROVEMENTS, OVERHEAD BRIDGES.

Mr. GILL asked the Minister for Railways: 1, In connection with the improvements to existing railways, how many bridges is it proposed to erect over the railways between West and East Perth stations? 2, What is the estimated total cost of same, including the proposed extensions to the Beaufort-street bridge?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, This matter is now under consideration, but no decision has yet been arrived at. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION — TRANS-AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY, PERTH TO KALGOORLIE ROUTE.

Mr. MONGER asked the Minister for Works: When will information be given as to the intentions of the Government in regard to the route of the Trans-Australian Railway from Perth to Kalgoorlie?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Parliament will be asked to authorise the construction of the first section from Merredin to Coolgardie, and the reason for this Bill will be explained on the second reading of same. The route to be adopted between Fremantle and Merredin has not yet been decided as the engineers have not completed their investigations in connection with the various routes.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. HEITMANN leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Price on account of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Traffic.
 - 2, Merredin-Coolgardie railway.
- Introduced by the Minister for Works.

MESSAGE -- WICKEPIN-MERREDIN RAILWAY SELECT COMMITTEES.

Power to confer.

Message from the Legislative Council requesting the Legislative Assembly to give leave to the select committee on the Wickepin-Merredin railway to confer with the like select committee of the Legislative Council, considered.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan) moved—

That the request of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

The request was merely that the committee appointed by the Legislative Assembly might be permitted to confer with the select committee of the Legislative Council to inquire into the deviation connected with the Wickepin-Merredin railway construction. There could be no objection to the two committees conferring on the matter.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) : There could be no objection to the committees conferring, and he was glad that the Premier had moved in the direction of agreeing to the request. He, however, would like the Premier to go further and request the committees to bring in a joint report. If that were possible, it might possibly, though not probably, save the presentation of two reports in connection with this very important matter.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan) : If the two committees conferred, all that the leader of the Opposition desired would be attained, and even if the two reports were not exactly alike, the committees would perhaps come to some general conclusion after having heard the same evidence and having conferred together. It was requested by the Legislative Council that the committee of that Chamber should only confer with the committee of the Legislative Assembly and the House might agree to that.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I should like to see them amalgamate.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) : It might be pointed out that if witnesses, particularly in the country, were called before the joint committees considerable expense would be saved and the convenience of those witnesses would be studied. The witnesses in the country would be spread over a big area and there was also the chance that the same evidence might not be available to both committee at separate times. If it was possible, he would suggest that the Premier might endeavour to bring about an arrangement by which the evidence in the country should be tendered to both committees at the one time. So far as the witnesses in Perth were concerned, that was a very different matter.

Mr. MONGER (York) : The request, as submitted by the Legislative Council might be given the quiescent vote of the Premier, and other members of the select committee in the Assembly ought to support the request. It was only fair and reasonable that, instead of having two reports submitted, there should be one, and he believed that that would be unanimous, notwithstanding the expression of opinion that had emanated from his friend the Minister for Works.

The Premier : It what direction will it be unanimous ?

Mr. MONGER : The right-minded gentlemen who occupied seats on these committees would, after hearing the evidence, arrive at only one conclusion.

The Minister for Works : What will that be ?

Mr. MONGER : So far as he was concerned, he was perfectly satisfied to leave the decision in the hands of the members of the select committees. In these circumstances it would be only fair and right for the Premier to agree to the suggestion put forward by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) : One could support the motion, even if it went further. But as the House had no precedent from the ancients, it was utterly impossible to do anything in the matter.

Mr. Monger : Why ?

Mr. UNDERWOOD : Because it had never been done before. Not having been done in the House of Commons, it could not be done here, according to the present Standing Orders. *May* had not provided for it, and even *Blackmore* had omitted to furnish the House with a precedent. If this House could possibly act without the precedent of the ancients and do something the ancients had not done, it would be wise if the committees could be amalgamated and worked as one committee; but, as under the present Standing Orders, this House could not move except in the direction that others had previously moved, the Premier could not agree to a joint committee although probably he would be willing to do so.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) : The sense of humour of the member for

Pilbara had caused him to play with the question in a way which he probably had not intended. So far as the doing of things that had not been done before was concerned, we were always doing that both in private and in public life, and although we always referred to *May* and *Blackmore* when we were on an unknown path, in order to get the light which the practice of the ancients could give, still, when on a path of our own, members on both sides of the House were prepared to make a bed for themselves to lie on.

Mr. Underwood: We have to be careful in these matters.

Mr. GEORGE: The House had to be careful of the hon. member because his great originality was sometimes making pitfalls for himself and others. Another place had passed a resolution appointing a select committee, and this House had also appointed a select committee; the two committees were engaged in investigating the one question, with, we believed, the desire to ascertain what was best for the country. That involved a lot of investigation and the calling of many witnesses, and in that work the desires of both Houses could be in accord. Why should it be necessary to put the country to the expense of having separate examinations by the two committees?

The Premier: All this would have been avoided if they had passed the Public Works Committee Bill last session.

Mr. GEORGE: It was not a question of what might have been. We were dealing with things as they obtained to-day. There was no question of pride or hurt feeling: the issue was what was best for the country. There could be nothing wrong in this House approaching another place and suggesting that the two committees should sit as a joint committee.

The Premier: Do you hold that the member for Pilbara was wrong on the constitutional aspect?

Mr. GEORGE: The member for Pilbara was the member for Pilbara. That expressed everything. The hon. member was unique, and members realised that he had a very vigorous commonsense and prejudices on some occasions which were

condoned by his very strong sense of humour.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: I am glad you appreciate him.

Mr. GEORGE: Members appreciated the member for Pilbara even more than they appreciated the member for Subiaco. But the question was whether the two committees could not be merged into one in order to save the country the extra expense and get a report that all could agree upon.

The Premier: It will cost more to set up your remarks in *Hansard* than to allow the committees to continue as they are.

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier need not worry about that, because he was going to get £6,000,000 of loan money and some of that could be transferred to *Hansard*. What did the Premier propose to do in this matter?

The Premier: To agree to the request of the Legislative Council.

Mr. GEORGE: Of course, if the Premier was resolved not to agree to a joint committee, and not to listen to the dictates of commonsense, members could not make him do it.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore): It seemed peculiar to have two select committees in another place, the one dealing with the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway deviation, and the other committee with the Wickepin-Merredin railway deviation, while at the same time a select committee of this House was dealing with both those questions. The Upper House now asked the Assembly to agree that, in considering the Wickepin-Merredin proposition, the committee appointed by the Council should confer with the committee which this House had appointed to consider both deviations. It was difficult to understand why, if the committees should confer on one proposition, they should not confer on the other. If it was necessary to confer in the one case it was necessary to confer in the other, particularly as in this House there was only one committee appointed to consider both railways. It was a pity, if it was necessary for both Houses to investigate this matter, that there had not been appointed a joint committee of both Houses to consider the

question, instead of having three committees dealing with the same questions at the one time. However, perhaps it was too late for a joint committee to be appointed now, and there were certainly no objections to the committee of the Upper House conferring with the committee of this House on the Wickepin-Merredin deviation, although it was desirable that they should confer also in regard to the Wongan Hills-Mullewa deviation. It would be regrettable if the two committees came to different decisions. The evidence would probably be the same, and it was desirable that they should come to the same decision. For that reason he regretted very much that, instead of adopting the course that had been adopted, a joint committee of both Houses had not been appointed.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco): Whilst not wishing to oppose the motion that the two committees should confer on the Wickepin-Merredin deviation, it was his desire to point out the necessity for the committee appointed by the Assembly continuing their inquiry. If this committee were to be merged into the committee appointed by another place to inquire into the Wickepin-Merredin line, the same thing should naturally take place in regard to the committee appointed to inquire into the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line. As chairman of the committee appointed by the Assembly, he had received a telegram which he would read to members in order to show the great necessity for the Assembly committee going on with their inquiry. The telegram read—

Please wire when Assembly committee coming to Wongan; not sufficient notice last one. Only fortnightly service Kokardine.—(Signed) Finck, chairman, Duli Progress Association.

That proved that a large number of people represented by the progress association in that district had not had an opportunity of putting their views before the Council committee appointed to inquire into the Wongan Hills-Mullewa deviation. That being so, the Assembly committee should go on with the inquiry in regard to both railways. There was no objection to conferring with the committee appointed by

the Council and seeing if a report satisfactory to both committees could not be brought forward. It would be a pity if the two committees brought forward contradictory reports, because it might be necessary then to have another committee appointed to ascertain which of the two reports was correct.

The PREMIER (in reply): Hon. members opposite would grasp from the remarks of the member for Subiaco, who was responsible for the appointment of the committee in this Chamber—

Mr. Monger: Is he?

The PREMIER: The member for Subiaco was responsible for the appointment of the committee, because he had moved for its appointment, and as chairman, speaking in behalf of the committee, he had already said he was prepared to confer with the Council committee, and if possible, draw up a report which would be satisfactory to both parties; failing which, each committee would have the right to draw up a report from its own standpoint. That being the case, the House could do no more, and in fact that was all that was desired in the Message from the Legislative Council. In those circumstances, the House would do well to agree to the Council's request.

Question put and passed, and a Message accordingly returned to the Legislative Council.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): I think I can congratulate the Attorney General on the very temperate language he used in introducing this measure, a measure which on a previous occasion, not quite in the same form, caused considerable acrimonious discussion and debate, and I go further than that and I say I hope that the example which he set in his opening remarks, with one little lapse, will be followed by members when

debating this measure. Last year we had a very heated debate, this year I hope we shall be able to discuss all the defects and all the virtues of the Bill without descending to personal charges as to how or when any member on a former occasion had stated what was a living wage in Western Australia. The Attorney General was good enough to take us back to the early ages of English history, quoting some great historian in connection with labour matters, even so far back as the fourteenth century. I do not know that it proved very much so far as the present day is concerned in regard to this vexed question but it was interesting and instructive, and he carried us from that date by easy stages, century after century, to the conditions of serfs and slaves, until we come to this day when this measure has been brought forward. One thing struck me. His quotation from the historian proved that the oft-expressed opinion of members on this side, and just as often disputed by members sitting opposite—that even labour was subject to the laws of supply and demand—was proved to be the case even so far back as the fourteenth century. Then he showed us that an epidemic, or something of the sort, had cleared away a great number of labourers and that the value of labour increased almost double, and that the Commons, in order to obviate a very much enhanced value of labour, passed a Bill that the ruling rate which prevailed three years previously should continue. This, of course, caused much trouble and resulted in practically a strike, and eventually the Attorney General showed us, after centuries had passed away, the efforts of trades unionism from that day to the present had resulted in great advancement in the condition of the workers generally. I am quite open to admit that trades unions have done excellent work in past ages and even are doing good work in many directions now, and I am not going to emphasise here the position I have always taken up that my opposition to trade unionism is based on the one fundamental principle that they have turned themselves easily into political organisations. If trades unions would concern

themselves about the betterment of their members and their fellow men in connection with the trades and industries to which they belong, there could not possibly be any exception taken to them, but when they want to take charge of the country, and not only influence the legislation of that country for the betterment of a certain few represented by their own members, then I think we are justified, we may be right or wrong, in taking exception to their action, and to any legislation which will confer largely increased powers in that direction. I admit at once that the Attorney General was most fair in putting his Bill before the Chamber. I have read his speech very carefully and I say at once I believe he has made an honest effort to frame a Bill which, in his opinion, will compel all and sundry to obey the mandates of the Arbitration Court. I hope that his hopes in that direction will be fully justified, but I cannot disguise from myself that our experience of arbitration courts in the past has not, I may say, justified the anticipation of that hope being duly fulfilled; for wherever we go, and wherever we have these arbitration courts established throughout the Commonwealth of Australia and the adjoining Dominion of New Zealand, we find that the awards of the arbitration courts, notwithstanding that some at any rate, the Commonwealth in particular and New Zealand, have largely increased powers over our own local arbitration court, are more often defied by those who receive the awards than obediently conformed to.

The Premier: That is a long way from correct.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have a very vivid recollection of industrial troubles that took place here very shortly after the hon. member took office as Premier with his colleagues as Ministers of the Crown, and I know a number of strikes took place and there was a number of occasions on which work ceased owing to some dispute which might have been settled by the Arbitration Court.

The Premier: That is a different statement now you are making.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : And some who defied the arbitration court refused to accept its decision. I go back to one case in which I was personally interested and I mention the Collie strike of some years ago.

The Premier: You said strikes since we took office.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There was the Fremantle Lumpers' dispute. If the Attorney General's Bill will overcome that difficulty then it must go further than the Premier wishes to point out by his interjection, that is to prevent men from defying the award. It must go further if it will carry out all the benefits which the Attorney General so ardently advocated for the measure. Then I think he will be congratulated, and the House, with some amendments, would approve of the measure. But I am very far from believing that the millenium will have arrived when the Bill is passed. I may here point out in passing that the question of arbitration—although one would have imagined from the eloquent periods of the mover when introducing the measure that this was the ideal moment when arbitration was to become a potent factor in the history of Western Australia—the question of arbitration has vexed members of Parliament and Houses of Parliament on many occasions, I may say with safety, during the past 15 or 20 years. It has been debated in trades halls amongst trades unionists, amongst workers of every description, with varied results, and varied success as far as the question is concerned. It is no new matter we are called on to discuss and consider this evening. It is as old at any rate as Responsible Government, or very shortly after Responsible Government in the State to which we belong. We find this Bill as presented, whilst it contains many provisions, I think, which will receive full approval from both sides of the House, it still carries with it all those defects which were pointed out in the measure which the Attorney General submitted and carried through the Chamber last session. I compliment him on the fact, however, that to-day we have a measure which is open and above board.

There is no attempt in the Bill to get new issues or principles introduced in ambiguous terms. We have the great question of preference to trade unionists or others fairly embodied in the Bill. We have the question of grade embodied in the Bill and many other matters which we took exception to last session, more particularly the question of preference to unionists which was not clear in that Bill, which was not clearly specified in the language of the Bill although it remained there. To-day we may compliment the Attorney General that he has openly come down, as he ought to do on all occasions, and say this is a measure we believe in, that we are going to ask the House to pass, and these are the principles embodied in it, which we believe in and want to pass into law. So far as I am concerned it seems to me, although we admit the Attorney General has pointed out in eloquent terms the condition of affairs from centuries ago in Great Britain, the position which he termed as being a condition of slavery, that under this Bill we are taking away a very large amount of the freedom of both the worker and the employer. It seems to me, when you place a condition in the Bill that not only can the court say to a worker you shall have preference from that employer in employment, but it says also to the employer you shall engage that man in preference to all others, we are driven back into the period of slavery so eloquently depicted by the Attorney General as existing years ago.

Mr. Swan: The court says it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Are we to become the slaves of the court?

Mr. Green: We are all slaves of the court.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Some of us more than others. It seems to me we are trying to perpetuate to some extent the condition of slavery that existed some centuries ago in the old country. I agree with the Attorney General that strikes have been the curse of all countries for generations past.

Mr. Heitmann: I do not think so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: And that notwithstanding the fact as he voiced it,

that some strikes have born good fruit and have bettered the conditions of the workers, yet taking them all round, strikes have lost millions and millions to the workers themselves, and have brought dire distress and want upon many innocent women and children. There never has been, since we passed the Arbitration Act in this country, any justification whatever for strikes in this State; and it passes my understanding why, when awards that have been in existence have been flouted on occasions, with the court ready to hear complaints on either side, our Government have, during the past ten months, sat still and permitted the men to go out on strike and bring the industries concerned to a standstill at great loss to the community, great inconvenience to the employers, and great distress to the workers engaged in those industries. The Acts in existence in the Commonwealth and New Zealand have failed to abolish strikes, and I am bound to come to the conclusion that the anticipations of the Attorney General, even if this Bill be passed in its entirety, are doomed somewhat to failure in that direction.

The Premier: There is not much logic in that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If the Attorney General expects that we are going to abolish strikes by passing this measure—and I admit at once he is endeavouring to frame it in such a way as to give power to interfere when strikes take place—I think he is expecting more than he will get from any body of workers; and I am satisfied that experience in Australia and New Zealand goes to prove my contention, whether it be logic, according to the assumption of the Premier, or otherwise. Should the Government sit by and have the industries of the country hung up as we have had them here during the last ten months? Should the Government sit by, as they did when we had the loco. strike, when the engineers were out on strike, when the aerated water employees went out on strike and endeavoured, by violence, to interfere with the free course of that industry when others were working it, when

the sewerage workers went out on strike, when the Lancefield miners were laid out on account of some moulders' dispute, when the wharf labourers at Fremantle went out on strike, and Mr. Speaker had to act as arbitrator before they would return to work? I could mention also the Geraldton railway-yard labourers, the Collie Burn miners, the men engaged on the regrading work on the railways, the *Daily News* literary staff, the sanitary staff at Leederville, the firemen at the Lake View mine, and the navvies on our agricultural railway construction; and so we have a list one might go on quoting for a considerable time of industrial disputes which were tacitly connived at by the present Administration, notwithstanding the loss they brought to the community generally. I am with the Attorney General—I am glad to be able to agree with him on a great many points—in his definition as to "worker" or "labourer." I agree with him that we members of this Chamber are actually workers or labourers in the full sense of the term. I agree with him that the man in the office or the shop or in the counting-houses of the banks of this country, whatever his calling or his employment, is just as much a worker as the man who takes a pick or shovel or axe into his hand and works at manual labour. We have all along, and for many years, advocated that definition of "labourer," and I am glad to-day the Attorney General has become educated up to that point in which he can agree with us in regard to this definition. But that is no reason, and certainly does not excuse, the present Government for having sat quietly by and permitted even the literary staff of the *Daily News* to go out on strike when they did, or also other people, some of whom I have enumerated from a list I happened to have noted down in connection with a previous speech. All these things could have been put an end to, at any rate, had the Government attempted to enforce the law. It is not a bit of use having laws, and having one party bound to conform to them, and the others for one reason and another—I am not pre-

pared here to say what the reason is—allowed to go scot free if they commit a breach of those laws. The Bill, as the Attorney General has pointed out, will create numbers of unions. There cannot be the slightest doubt about that, because we must have a union, according to the Bill, before we can appeal to the court to adjudicate.

Mr. Dwyer: You had them before.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not see why it is absolutely necessary, even if we had had them before, that we should force the creation of a union, as defined in this measure, before a citizen can get the benefit of the Arbitration Court. I do not see why the Arbitration Court should not be made absolutely free of approach. I am with the Attorney General in his effort to make it free so far as those who wish to take advantage of the court that they can go to it and get a decision, but I do not see why our Arbitration Court could not be made as free even as the police courts are to-day to any citizens—employers or employees. If we are to put all the powers contained in this Bill into that court so that, to use the language of the Attorney General, even the “minutest detail” of the industry is to be controlled by that court, then I think the court should be as open as the police courts are to-day to the citizens of the State. Why should not the majority of workers in any factory, or in any industry, decide to approach the court to settle a dispute? And why should not if we wish it, the very fact of going before the court be an act of registration so far as that body is concerned? Why should not any master, without being in a union, be able to walk into the court, and state his case, and have it heard?

Mr. Swan: How many courts would you require?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There will be a good many courts required under this Bill when it gets properly going. It seems to me that, if we are going to take away the control from the employers, the men who found the industry, and place it in the hands of the court, there should not be the slightest obstacle to that man, or a union of employees on the other

hand, approaching that court. In Clause 6 we have set forth those who may register as a union. One or more employers, employing 50 persons, for the previous six months I think it is, can register as a union. On the other hand, we have ten workers who can register as a union. Therefore, in the case, for instance, of domestic servants, we have this peculiar position. It will take 50 employers, each employing one domestic servant, to form a union, whereas ten domestic servants can combine and approach the court. That is incongruous to say the least of it.

The Attorney General: You are not correct: you are quoting associations, not unions.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: “Industrial Unions and Associations.” That is the portion I am referring to, but I read it that it will take 50 employers of one domestic servant each to form an association or union of employers.

The Attorney General: It will take more than that to form an association.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: And in the case of workers, not less than ten may become members of a union or association. I point this out as a weakness; I may be wrong, but the Attorney General will, no doubt, look into it. So far as the Bill aims at getting rid of the difficulties of approaching the court, and at making the road easier to have troubles and disputes heard and settled, it meets with the approbation of everyone, and is indeed worthy of support from all members, not only in this Chamber, but, I hope, in another place; but so far as the Bill gives absolute control over the whole of an industry—the minutest detail of an industry—even to the question of the discharge of employees, I think it goes much too far. To take away the control of the industry from those who have embarked their capital in it, so that the minutest detail of that industry has to be settled by a court, to my mind interferes in an unwarrantable way with the freedom of the employers.

The Attorney General: I do not think I used the expression “minutest detail.”

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, I have the honourable member's speech here. However, it seems to me that if we want our industries to prosper and our workers also to prosper with them, we ought to give as much latitude and freedom both to the employer and the employee as we consistently can with an arbitration court. If that arbitration court is to continue in our State and tie up the employer—I am speaking more especially from that aspect at the present moment—so that even if the dispute has to do with the slightest concerns possible, such as the dismissal of a foreman or a worker, it can be made the cause of an appeal to the arbitration court with its attendant expense and loss of time. That, to my mind, will be hampering the industrial progress of the State. Surely it cannot be to the interests either of the employer or of the worker. The Attorney General just now took exception to being credited with the use of the words "minutest details." This is what he said: "We enable the court to give—"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is not in order. Standing Order 125 says: "No member shall read extracts from newspapers or other documents referring to debates in the House during the same session."

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have merely been refreshing my memory by looking at this document.

The Attorney General: Is that the *Hansard* report?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes. I am now in a position to say that the Attorney General used the words—"even to the minutest detail for the purpose of preserving and perpetuating industrial peace."

The Attorney General: For that purpose alone.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes.

The Attorney General: It is an important qualification.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But every act of an arbitration court is for the purpose of preserving industrial peace. The very Bill is framed with that object. Up to the present, unfortunately, this ideal has not been achieved. We have been

disappointed in the results; hence the suggestion I made last year that we should depart from the arbitration principle and adopt that of the wages board which, I believe, has been found to work very satisfactorily in other States.

Mr. Swan: It got a pretty bad reception from the people.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No. It has never yet been fully put before the people. However, that is the attitude I take in this matter. I do not believe in interfering with the management of any industrial concerns in minute details, and I think the enormous power conferred on the court in this respect will have a detrimental effect, and will not serve to make our industries more prosperous. The constitution of the court is better than that outlined last year. It practically follows the present constitution, with the exception of the president. Here I find, notwithstanding something which, I think, was reported of the Attorney General's remarks in connection with the Bill, namely, that the president need not necessarily be a judge of the Supreme Court, as he is to-day. I find the clause, at any rate as I read it, leaves the matter absolutely open. The Government of the day may appoint any person or any individual to this honourable position of president of the Arbitration Court. Notwithstanding that, I believe the Attorney General has it in his mind to appoint a judge, or at least a qualified legal practitioner. Yet I should much prefer to see the Bill amended to give effect to that expression of opinion which he has already voiced through the Press. The enormous powers embodied in the Bill for punishment for non-observance of the awards, going even so far as imprisonment, to my mind require more than ever that we should maintain as president of that court one of the judges of our Supreme Court: and although there has been some amendment of this measure in as much as the term of the appointment is limited to seven years—if any other than a judge be appointed, I take it—yet I venture to think that a court with the powers embodied in the Bill ought to have as its president one who has no

limitation to his appointment except at the will of Parliament, and he certainly ought to be a judge of our Supreme Court. The other appointments as suggested and outlined appear to me to be good. The addition of deputy representatives to take the place of the members of the court who are appointed on the recommendation of the employers on the one hand and of the employees on the other hand, is an excellent innovation which will, I think, go to enable the court to get through its work more expeditiously than in the past. For instance, the other day we saw that the court adjourned because one of the representatives was ill. Had a deputy been available the business of the court might have gone on, notwithstanding the indisposition of that particular member. The provision that awards shall continue until their term has expired, or thereafter until one party or the other withdraws from the award, seems to me also to be in the right direction. Last year I pointed out that our present Act was defective in that direction. The fact that an award lapsed and that no one was thereafter bound by it seemed to me to be highly detrimental. I am glad to see there is a provision in the Bill that an award shall continue until the parties withdraw or until a new award is obtained from the court. The powers of the court go very far beyond what I believe should be its powers. They go far beyond the establishment of a minimum wage. The court is given power to grade all the employees of any industry.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Not all, only where found necessary.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The court is given power to grade all employees in any industry, a thing which is objectionable and unworkable, at any rate from the management point of view.

Mr. Dwyer: That is discretionary with the judge.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am well aware of that.

Mr. Dwyer: Surely you can trust a judge.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The judge knows nothing about the incidence of an industry. A judge might go into the hon.

member's office and grade the employees there, but he could not go into the hon. member's foundry and do it with any hope of success.

Mr. Munsie: Then why advocate a judge as president.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Because of his judicial capacity. Still we do not require to give him a power that he cannot carry out. The grading of employees is beyond experts, except the experts in the industry concerned. You cannot take an expert in one industry and expect him to grade employees in another industry. To my mind you can never get satisfactory grading of employees in any industry from a court of arbitration constituted as this is, or indeed from any court you may constitute. Besides, it is an interference with the right of the employer and his officers to decide as between the different grades which are necessary in the carrying out of his industry.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Could the court not form an opinion on the evidence?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No; you want actual practical experience. It is not a question of evidence.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): This does not deal with the capability of any individual.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But the court can do it. The court can grade every individual in an industry. Then we come to that old power which we have objected to on every occasion on which the proposition has been brought forward, namely, preference to unionists. On this question I have often voiced my opinion, but I must place on record once more the fact that I do not believe in preference being given to any man, whether employer or employee. I think all men should be placed on the same level and have the same right to work out their own individual salvation. To insist that an employer shall take a man because he happens to belong to some trades union, on the one hand, or to insist, on the other hand, as the Attorney General has pointed out, that the employee or member of a certain union must offer his services to a certain employer, if he should require

them, is a thing which no man who has had any experience in the control of industrial matters would support for one moment. It strikes at the very liberty of the subject. The very liberty of a man to do what he likes with his own ability, his own labour—a marketable product—is threatened by this proposal. Let a man serve an employer if he wishes, but do not call upon him to serve an employer whom he does not care to work for. It seems to me the whole thing is building up difficulties for the future, ceaseless agitation, and court cases involving great cost and loss of time, which would be better utilised in furthering the progress and prosperity of the country.

Mr. Heitmann: You have managed coal mines in your time. You there employed unionists.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I always employed unionists. I do not object to employing unionists.

Mr. Heitmann: But this principle has been observed in coal mines for years.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Why put it in the Bill? Why make it a breach of the law for an employer to decline to employ a certain man? Am I not to employ non-unionists? The court may lay it down that I am to employ all members of a certain union if they are available. I have, say, a number of non-unionists, together with all available unionists, and as other unionists become available I am to get rid of the non-unionists to make room for the unionists. Is that fair?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Nothing of the kind. That is untrue.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member must withdraw that.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I say that is an unbearable position; it is a position that no employer could put up with for one moment and I hope the House will agree to strike out these clauses. The Bill stipulates a limitation of hours for piece workers, but I believe that the court has that power already and can award that no worker may work more than a stated number of hours in any industry. That being so, I do not know that it is

necessary to put this special power in the measure. However, I do not suppose that any great objection can be taken to it. I am glad to admit that the Attorney General has made an honest attempt to give the court full powers to enforce its awards on either side. He is to be commended for that. The penalties are both numerous and heavy in many instances and apply, as he pointed out, to both employer and employee as the case may be. Of course, we will have the difficulty that a penalty imposed on individual workers will not be so easy to recover as that imposed on an employer, and I here suggest that the Attorney General may take another leaf from the legislation of New Zealand, I think it is, which makes the wages of the worker, who has defied the court and upon whom a penalty has been imposed, liable for the payment of the fine. If that were done, then perhaps both sides would be more on an equality. I cannot approve of the several limitations I have referred to, I cannot approve of interference with the management of industries by any court, I cannot approve of the grading of employees by any court, and I have strong objection, amounting to repugnance, to giving preference to anyone. The court's powers go so far in this direction under this Bill that I am bound to say that, whilst I approve of every means to make the court more accessible to those who wish to take advantage of its awards, yet, I must oppose with all the power I possess these clauses, which tend, to my mind to create industrial disputes rather than industrial peace. With regard to that portion of the measure which brings the different Government departments and the railways under the court's jurisdiction, I am inclined to think they would be much better left under the present legislation and directly under the control of Parliament. I do not think State employees should be taking Ministers into any court at all, excepting the courts of appeal which are already created, more especially in connection with the Railway Department, to settle any differences that may arise between the Commissioner and his men. The Bill provides that any award

which may be given against the Commissioner of Railways, or any Government department, I take it, and any costs in connection therewith, shall be paid from an appropriation made by Parliament. I want to know what the position will be if Parliament does not see fit to appropriate the money necessary to comply with the award. It seems to me we would be in a very peculiar position. On the one hand we provide that they may approach this court and apply for an award which may or may not give them increased remuneration, and, on the other hand, it is left to Parliament to say whether money shall be appropriated to pay for that award. That appeals to me as taking some of the power from the Commissioner which he has under his Statute, and also to be taking away some of the power which this House ought always to exercise, not directly, but inferentially, because it stands to reason that if the Government allow their servants to go to the Arbitration Court, whatever the award is Parliament must endorse it. There we have at once a third power coming in which by its actions, honestly done, may plunge the country into a large expenditure of money which Parliament has not previously sanctioned. I have endeavoured to briefly put before the House what I consider are the defects in the measure. I have endeavoured to openly admit that there are many good points; I have endeavoured also, I think, to appreciate the eloquent and temperate manner in which the Attorney General introduced a contentious Bill, and with these remarks I may say at once that when the Bill goes into Committee I shall endeavour to amend some of the clauses which I object to.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

BILL—PEARLING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

Mr. GARDINER (Roebourne): In rising to support the second reading of this Bill, I must express my satisfaction

with the attitude of the Government in endeavouring at all events to conserve the pearling industry on the West Australian coast. So far as I can understand, there are at the present juncture, innumerable Acts of Parliament dealing with this question, but up to the present no real effort has been made to either foster this industry or try experiments of any magnitude in regard to the cultivation of the pearl shell. Of course, I realise that at Shark Bay some small efforts have been made, and I believe with a degree of success, but the conditions at Shark Bay are entirely different from those in the North-West. In fact I can see no analogy between the industries of the two places, although both are classed as pearling industries. At Montebello Island, Mr. Haynes, who had an exclusive license, has done good work in the direction of proving that it is possible to cultivate the pearl shell, and, so far as he has gone, has met with a great deal of success, but, owing to the attitude of the past Government in not giving him the encouragement he desired, and owing also to the insecurity of his tenure, he was unable to proceed at the pace he wished, and consequently the results achieved are not as great as he claims they would have been had he been given reasonable encouragement. So far, we have not one measure making provision to prevent the depletion of the pearling grounds, and I am glad to see that the Government are making in this Bill a movement in that direction. At Broome we have what is probably the largest pearling town in the world, as the mere value of the annual production of shell and pearls proves. I am thoroughly in accord with the main provisions of the Bill, but I will find it necessary in Committee to criticise some of the clauses and move amendments in various directions. For instance, I am opposed to the granting of any exclusive rights in this industry. I am given to understand that the conditions at Shark Bay are such that it is necessary to make some provision of that nature, but in the North-West it will be absolutely undesirable to grant any exclusive licenses in the pearling industry. The Minister has pointed out that so far as the North-West

is concerned, the total direct revenue derived from the pearling industry is considerably under £400. That is indeed a small sum, when we remember the immense fortunes which are accumulated in the North-West in the operation of this industry. It was further pointed out by the Minister that under the Bill the revenue to be derived will exceed £2,000, but to my mind, even that is altogether inadequate, and some means should be devised in this measure for the purpose of raising greater revenue. It will be necessary to enter upon some proper system for the cultivation of shell, because, if that is not done the banks will become depleted and the industry will be a thing of the past. Experiments of this nature must necessarily involve a considerable expenditure, but even apart from the cultivation of shell, the Bill as it stands will necessitate heavy expenditure in connection with the greater supervision of the industry. Seeing that it will be necessary to expend money in connection with the cultivation of the shell, I consider that those people who are best able to bear the burden, and who in the long run will reap the reward of any success in this direction, should be compelled to pay for the experiments.

Mr. George: How long does it take to grow the shell?

Mr. GARDINER: I am not prepared to say. The experiments that have been tried have not revealed anything of a definite nature.

Mr. George: Twenty or thirty years.

Mr. GARDINER: That has never been proved. So far as I know, it will take from eight to 10 years, but that is only an estimate arrived at by pearlers who have not actually experimented.

Mr. Dwyer: But cultivation is possible?

Mr. GARDINER: It is possible, as was proved by experiments in Queensland a few years ago, and further confirmed by the operations on Montebello Island. It is my intention at the Committee stage, after learning the legal aspect of the case, to move, if the Constitution will permit me, that a substantial royalty be paid on the shell produced in the North-West. Of course I realise that there will be con-

siderable opposition from the pearling fraternity of Broome and along the coast generally, but I will endeavour to prove that on the figures of the past and the price of shell, pearlers are able to pay a substantial royalty and provide an adequate revenue to cover experiments in the cultivation of shell. During last year, according to the customs returns, the total quantity of shell exported was 1,274 tons. Taking the number of boats or vessels which are operating in the industry, that would mean three and a-half tons per boat. The latest market price for mother-of-pearl shell shows that good or first class realised as high as £375 per ton. I am speaking of pearl shell exclusive of that fished in Shark Bay, because that fished in Shark Bay at times realises as low as £40 per ton. I am referring to the North-West coast and such places as Broome, Cosack, and Onslow.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What was the average price?

Mr. GARDINER: The average price is £307 per ton.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that in London or here?

Mr. GARDINER: That is in London, and I believe the market is likely to remain firm. In arriving at my calculation I have based the probable price of shell at £250 per ton, instead of £300. That, at three and a-half tons per boat, would mean that one boat would realise £875 for shell alone. The Minister for Works pointed out that the value of pearls obtained, so far as he could gather, and I believe he took his figures from official returns, was £68,000. That amount I consider is altogether inadequate, because as far back as 1903 the then leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pigott), who is now a big pearler—

Hon. Frank Wilson: A very poor one now.

Mr. GARDINER: I am not prepared to say that.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But the man has been unfortunate, and lost all his money.

Mr. GARDINER: That is mere assertion. Mr. Pigott at that time stated that, although the official returns set down the value of pearls obtained in the North-West

at £40,000, he could prove that one man operating in that industry exported £60,000 worth of pearls. At that time the pearling industry was very small compared with what it is at the present day. I believe that the boats were considerably fewer in number, and that the quantity of shell exported was consequently considerably less. If at that time £60,000 worth of pearls were exported by one man, the value of exports at present would be double that amount. With my knowledge I can say that the official total is altogether too small. The smallest pearler will tell us that if one boat does not realise £300 worth of gems a year it is not doing well. Some of the boats realise thousands of pounds worth. I have based my calculations upon an average of £250 a boat for pearls, in addition to shell, and the total return on the London market would thus be £1,125. We can allow a reasonable amount for the cost of placing it on the market, including commission, and estimate the net return of each vessel at £1,000 a year. This is a fair and reasonable estimate; in fact, I consider it a low one, but I desire to give the pearlers a fair and honest deal. The total working expenses for each boat per year may be put down at £500. Where many boats are working in a fleet the cost is considerably diminished. Therefore, for one lugger, there is a net return of over £500 per boat.

Mr. George: Is that per year?

Mr. GARDINER: Yes, and I consider that is a low estimate. After having been among the pearlers I say it is almost impossible to arrive at a correct statement of the value of pearls exported.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How do you make up the £500 working expenses?

Mr. GARDINER: I have not the details of the figures with me. I can say, however, that wages are small, thirty shillings a month being paid to the men exclusive of the tender and the diver. The diver gets £2 a month and £20 a ton on his shell. The tender gets about £4 a month. As far as provisions are concerned they cost little, the chief items are rice and fish with a little potato and onion at times—just the absolute necessities of

life. For pickles or jam the men have to make their purchases from the slop-chest. In many instances the luggers get the men's labour for nothing on account of the existence of the slop-chest system. The men smoke and they like a few luxuries, and in many instances they find at the end of the month that they are in debt to the pearler instead of having wages to draw.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have they not to pay a premium for the divers?

Mr. GARDINER: At times they do. If a diver has a very good reputation, the pearler will pay as much as £200.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How long will that keep him?

Mr. GARDINER: Only for a year, but that is only paid to a diver who holds a good reputation and is likely to bring in a good quantity of shell. If the diver does not work off that advance in the year, he must remain until the advance is worked off.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that an advance?

Mr. GARDINER: Yes. Coloured divers are somewhat superstitious and they hold that if they are in debt to the master he will keep the gear in good order for the reason that, if they happen to be killed, the master would lose the advance he had paid to them. Continuing the figures I was quoting a lugger costs about £700. What other business in Western Australia, or in Australia for that matter, is there in which an investment of £700 will enable an individual to stay in the town as the pearlers do and receive an assured income of £500 a year? It is possible to find old men and young men with one lugger leading a life of luxury. We allow them the cheapest possible labour, which is not right, because I hold that the industry can be worked with white labour. Recently I read an article in the *Sunday Times* which stated that the divers sent out from home had not proved a success. I attribute this to the fact that the men were brought out from the old country and that they have been trained for salvage diving, which is entirely different from pearl diving. One of them was paralysed and I believe the

others have thrown up the sponge, and desire to return home. If the white divers received the same training as the Asiatic divers they would equal the Asiatics, if they did not prove better. The diver goes down and has to overcome all obstacles, and the nature of the bottom of the sea is invariably foreign to the man who is brought out from the old country. Divers are not in a position for perhaps three or six months to locate the position of the shell, and possibly they will not know when they are passing over good pearl shell. If reasonable encouragement were given to white divers and if they were trained as systematically as Asiatics, I believe they would prove as successful. It takes two years to train an Asiatic. He devotes Saturday afternoons and spare time, and then becomes a try diver and afterwards is signed on as a regular diver. I think a royalty of £10 a ton should be paid on the shell, and the industry could well afford it. This would mean a total of £12,740 per annum based on the shell obtained last year in the North-West, exclusive, as I said, of Shark Bay. That would supply an adequate amount to enable the Government to undertake the cultivation of pearl shell on the coast in a scientific and systematic manner. I consider that Mr. Aldridge, the gentleman in charge of the Fisheries Department, would be well able to carry out these duties. He is most enthusiastic and I think he would succeed in regenerating the pearling industry. Many of the pearling banks which were in use a few years ago, are now not much good. If we had some regulation to restrict the size of shell to be fished for, and make provision for closing up grounds for certain periods, the industry would be benefited. Otherwise, when it does come to pass that white men are engaged as divers, there will be no shell for them to fish for.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is there not a restriction now with regard to the size of the shell?

Mr. GARDINER: Not to my knowledge, and if there is a restriction there is no supervision, as there are no inspectors to see that certain shell is not ship-

ped. The pearlers will tell us that they will go away and operate from the Dutch Islands. That, however, is a mere bogey. If it were practicable to do so, they would be operating from there to-day in preference to working from Australia. The people in the Dutch Islands, however, do not want them and have told them so. Mr. Pigott in his speech made it apparent that there was a good deal of dummying, so far as the pearling industry is concerned. Asiatics are not permitted to hold licenses but they are paying as much as £200 to white men to hold licenses for them. If it were possible to carry on the industry from the Dutch Islands, would not the Asiatics be operating from there already, and bringing their boats across to Australian waters to fish for the shell? Notwithstanding the statements of the Pearl-ers' Association, most of the shell fished in Broome comes from territorial waters.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They could not operate from the Dutch Islands in territorial waters?

Mr. GARDINER: No, but I am pointing out that if it were practicable to operate from those Islands many of the Asiatics who have been anxious to enter the industry, would have had boats coming here long ere this, and operating on the coast. I do not propose to deal at any great length with this measure, but I intend to criticise many of the clauses in committee, and will also move several amendments. I intend to move that a royalty be placed on pearl shell. If it were possible, I would rather see a substantial royalty placed on pearls, but there are many difficulties in the way of doing that. A pearl of great value is of small dimensions, and can be easily concealed and surreptitiously sent away from the State. Therefore, if we imposed a royalty upon the pearls we would victimise the honest members of the pearling community, while those who defrauded the State would go scot free. It is almost impossible to arrive at a definite conclusion regarding the value of pearls found along the North-West coast.

Mr. George: Are many lost or stolen?

Mr. GARDINER: Of course there are.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have you sufficient means for preventing illicit dealing?

Mr. GARDINER: I should advocate a most stringent regulation to prevent illicit dealing in pearls. I think the onus should be placed on the person in whose possession they were to show where he got them.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. GARDINER: I was pointing out that I favoured the most stringent regulations or laws being brought into effect to endeavour to prevent the snide pearl-dealing in Broome and other North-West towns. It is a most difficult question to deal with, and I am aware that pearlers will openly negotiate pearls, no matter what legislation is passed. One pearler told me that he might as well buy the pearl offered to him, although it might be his own, as allow other persons to get it at a cheaper rate through its being illicit. I understand some slight misunderstanding has arisen in regard to the advances made to divers. Some members hold the view that a premium is paid to the men undertaking diving work on luggers, but such is not the case. Advances are made to divers, and during the course of the next year the divers have to work these advances off. They are paid, as it were, beforehand to accomplish their work, and the pearlers only incur losses in the event of accidents overtaking the divers, or diver's paralysis taking them off. They are merely paying wages, but doing it in advance. The State should derive considerable revenue from this industry, but as at present conducted it is of little or no value to the State, inasmuch as almost all the people engaged in it are Asiatics working at a very low rate of wage, 30s. a month, as I previously pointed out. I consider that an industry that will not support white labour is of little value to the State. It is inconceivable to me that past Governments have permitted this industry to thrive and contribute so little revenue. Just imagine over £300,000 worth exported from our shores in one year, and the whole of the industry in the hands of

Asiatics, and yet the State received under £400 revenue from it. I consider it preposterous, and I believe that even under the present conditions the revenue received from the industry should be increased. Without any further comment upon the Bill I support the second reading.

On motion by Mr. McDonald debate adjourned.

MOTION — RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, CONTRACTS TO EXPEDITE.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion of the Hon. Frank Wilson:—"That in order to expedite the granting of railway facilities to settlers, and in order to increase the avenues of employment for our people, it is expedient that contracts be called immediately for all railways authorised by Parliament."

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): I rise with a great deal of pleasure to support the motion so ably moved by my leader. I would like to show what led up to the system of light agricultural railways, which, since 1906, we have been putting down systematically in order that the agricultural land of Western Australia might be opened up.

The Minister for Works: You ought to start from 1904.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There was very little done until 1906.

The Minister for Works: We showed you how to do it, that is all, and we gave you the money to start with.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is perfectly true that the Minister for Works, who was Minister in 1904, built a line to Jandakot, but that is the only thing he achieved. As a matter of fact the policy of agricultural railways was started when the line was built from Northam to Goomalling, but I maintain there was no system that was worthy of the name until it was instituted in our time. It is perfectly true there was not the same encouragement as there is now; it is perfectly true the need for these agricultural railways has grown in force year by year

—if the Minister for Works likes—since 1904. Six years ago there were 360,000 acres under crop, whereas this year I hope there will be a million and a quarter acres, and last year there were 1,070,000 acres. The land cleared six years ago was only 700,000 acres. To-day we have two and a quarter million acres cleared. Improved land six years ago was about two and a quarter million. The figures are something approaching six million acres to-day. So we see the need for these railways has become more apparent to-day and the demand for them more insistent. The Minister for Works must know it, as, during the past year, he must have had many requests for railways in new districts. Men have been encouraged to open that new country because they knew they would be reached by our system of light agricultural railways. They could not be expected to go on with this work of development unless they felt that we would carry out our responsibility to them, now that they have brought about this enormous amount of settlement we could not otherwise have obtained.

Mr. Heitmann: What about the people of the Yorkrachine district?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There is no reason why the country between Yorkrachine and Tammin should not support a railway. The distance between those two centres is too great. The Dowerin-Merredin line was carried too far to the north.

Mr. Underwood: Why did you carry it there?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In those days we had a policy which said that railways might be 30 miles apart. That standard was set up as the result of a fairly costly Royal Commission which said that 30 miles would be a reasonable distance, but it is wrong, and if there is to be any deviation it is not right to carry it beyond that 30 miles limit. I would like to see railways 25 miles apart.

The Minister for Works: I always reckon we need to get around obstacles inside the 25 miles.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Most assuredly that should be done.

The Premier: Every settler would like a railway within two miles.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier was on that Royal Commission that recommended 30 miles, but in those days it seemed a tremendous step to take when it was included in the recommendation of that Commission. However, when the Yorkrachine country is opened up, as it should be, it ought to pay the working costs on a short line. There is a vast number of people who have been unmistakably promised railway facilities. We sold between January, 1906, and December, 1911, nearly nine million acres of land. Altogether we have sold 20 million acres. These sales were brought about by the knowledge that railways would follow settlement and development.

Mr. Heitmann: The actual sale of agricultural land should carry with it a contract to supply railway facilities.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is just what it does, because Parliament and the country accepted long ago the idea of light agricultural railways for every centre. As a matter of fact, if we are to mark on the map all the railways needed to bring the land in the South-West division within reasonable rainfall to within 12½ miles of a railway, we would not be doing more than will have to be done before the system is completed. The object of the leader of the Opposition in moving this motion was in order to have railways taken quickly to the waiting settlers. In my opinion they have waited quite long enough, much longer than I like, and I daresay much longer than any member of the House would care to have them wait. The question is no longer a party one, because we have all undertaken the responsibility. This was not always so. I remember when the early lines were introduced by the Moore Government, there was considerable objection raised by members who are now sitting on the Government side.

Mr. Heitmann: Not to the construction of the lines.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes.

The Premier: Did you not complain once about the routes of some of the railways?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Most assuredly.

The Premier: That is no more than most of those sitting on this side ever did.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They said they did not have sufficient information; but that was by the way; the opposition was to building these agricultural lines at all.

The Premier: If that is so it tells against yourself, because you did the same thing.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. The only line I questioned was the Katanning-Kojonup line, and I questioned it because I thought there were other districts better deserving of being served. The present Government have determined to build railways departmentally, according to the Minister for Works, at the rate of 200 miles per annum. I understand from the Minister that the plant will not do more than this, and that to buy more plant would probably be a wrong step, because it would not be needed after the lines were constructed. The motion sets out that, in order that these people may be reached quickly, some of these lines should be built by contract. If our land is to be put to its best advantage, if these people are to do their best for the State, we want the lines built quickly in order that they may be able to get their produce to market. Settlers cannot be served quickly under the departmental system unless the Minister accelerates his scheme. If the interests of the people are to be considered, then the Government must depart from its determination to use day labour only. It is true that the Minister has admitted he is not doing all the work departmentally; I believe he is pulling down the old Fremantle jetty by contract, a work which might well have been done by day labour, or even not done at all at the present time, because that £1,700 which it will cost could have been used to much better advantage.

The Minister for Works: And there might have resulted thousands of pounds worth of damage and the loss of many lives.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government with which I was connected carried out a good deal of work by contract and also

did a fair amount departmentally. The Public Works Department tendered for every line it was proposed to build, and if their tender was the most favourable it was accepted.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is correct. If the Engineer-in-Chief advised that the department could do better than the contractor, and the price of the department was lower, then the department got the work. On the other hand, if the Engineer-in-Chief advised that the work could be better done by contract, the work was then given out. It was not a question of saving a few pounds; as a matter of fact under the day labour system there would be no money saved, on the contrary money would be wasted. Men will be employed at higher wages, and the men can do less work than they would do under a contractor. I repeat that the very life of the people on the land demands that we shall adopt means to bring relief to them as quickly as possible. If all the railways which are needed to open up the country could be put in hand to-morrow, the people who would be engaged in building them would be absorbed as workers on the land immediately after the lines were constructed. It is a well-known fact that the building of a line makes work. There is no doubt now about the established success of the agricultural industry. We need not go farther for evidence of that success than the city itself. It has been largely rebuilt, and this has been done entirely on the strength of agricultural development, and not on development alone, but on the realisation that Western Australia is a great agricultural country capable of much development, and the knowledge that that development will be undertaken. That development must take a foremost place in the policy of the Government, whether it be a Government led by the present Premier or any other. The present trade is abundant evidence also of the success of railway construction. Without railways there cannot be any development. This should be admitted by the Government because of the arrangements they have made with the

farmers at Esperance. In that district it is realised that the crop cannot be marketed at all under the present system, and in order that the settlers there might be encouraged the Government have arranged to put in a depôt, and this is what they are doing. They have supplied seed wheat and fertilisers and carted them to the farmers, while they have agreed to buy the wheat at a depôt which is to be near Grass Patch, and the price to be given will be what it would be worth if a railway were constructed to Esperance. The Government know very well, with the price they will have to pay for cartage, it will not be profitable to cart wheat that distance.

The Minister for Mines: What has that to do with departmental construction?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It has a lot to do with it. We are urging that if railways are to be built they should be built quickly, and the Minister for Railways should not object to these facts being made known; he must know that he has agreed to buy wheat at a price that will not pay.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Are you arguing that the Esperance railway should be built by contract?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am arguing that the farmers at Esperance cannot grow wheat unless the Government buy it from them for more than it is worth, and this argument applies to other agricultural settlements where similar arrangements have been made. The motion is intended to urge upon the Government the necessity for accelerating speed in railway construction.

The Premier: It comes well from your side.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It comes very well and very properly from this side because we built railways as fast as they could be laid down. After all, the policy which has to be followed is the policy which we laid down. Last session we passed Bills authorising the construction of 650 miles of railway.

The Minister for Mines: You know well that you passed Bills for railways that you could not construct for three or four years.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We would have constructed these railways quickly if we had remained in office. It is futile for Ministers to claim that they have a greater interest in this work than we have.

The Minister for Works: I say most emphatically we have.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The leader of the Opposition made out a very good case for the speedy construction of these railways, and it seems to me also that the Government should pay some attention to the experience of the Eastern States. It is perfectly true that the Governments in other parts of Australia have tried to carry out these undertakings departmentally, and the leader of the Opposition showed what happened in Adelaide, where a Government started one work departmentally and then handed it over to a contractor.

Member: You did not hear the Minister's reply.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And in Sydney also the Government found that the system of day labour was not the best. I am certain that there will always be want of supervision under the system of departmental construction. The Engineer-in-Chief, who is responsible for the work, not only manages the work but supervises it, draws cheques to pay the workmen and does everything that is necessary in connection with the laying down of the line. If the work were being carried out by contract he would have none of these duties to perform, but he would be able to see that the contractor gave satisfaction to the State. When a departmental estimate is submitted it is only natural for the officers to desire that it shall not be exceeded. We are urging the Government by this motion to expedite the building of the agricultural railways and to provide work for the large number of unemployed in the State. It is of no use the Minister treating this matter lightly, because we have an employed difficulty, not only in Kalgoorlie, but in Perth, and more or less throughout the State.

Mr. Lander: Who created it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Thank God I am not responsible for the creation of the hon. member anyhow. If the Govern-

ment will interest themselves in this motion they will realise the advisableness of constructing some of the railways by contract. I stand here to-night as one of those responsible for the settlement of many people on the land, and I feel I owe them a duty, and it is in this spirit that I am urging the Minister for Works to reconsider his determination on the question of departmental construction. Coming down to the remarks of the Minister for Works, I must confess, after having listened to him, that if I had not known the facts I should have been convinced. The leader of the Opposition in submitting the motion did not make it a party one. There was no need to do that because we are all agreed upon this great question of agricultural railway construction being the true policy for the country to follow. Naturally, some credit—and this is what hurts the Minister for Works—has accrued to the mover of this motion, for bringing the question of railway facilities prominently before the House and the public.

The Premier: It was before the public long before you were in Parliament.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have already told the Premier that the mere building of a railway from Jandakot to Armadale did not establish the system of agricultural railway construction. The Minister for Works, in the course of his remarks, sought to avoid his responsibility and made many rash statements about doing too much now. The discussion that has taken place from time to time on this question shows that public opinion favourable to our ideas has been developed. The Minister, in his reply, displayed the determination that at any cost he would cover up the true position in order to satisfy members on his side. His anxiety in this regard was so much overdone that his remarks should have aroused suspicion, even in the minds of those sitting opposite. The Minister quoted figures showing the progress which had been made during the past 12 months. He said 285 miles of railway had been laid down. He said, also, that they were spending more money than we did. He made this comparison with a view to convincing the

public that he was doing more than we did. It was significant, however, that he did not name any of these lines included in the 285 miles, which he said had been constructed during the last ten months. He did not do so, because he knew that these lines had been put in hand by the late Government. It is true that these lines have been completed during the term of office of my friend the Premier, but it is equally true that the Minister found a position which he could not control. The lines had to go along; the contracts were already let and we were committed to the works. The increased monthly expenditure was brought about by obligations set up by us. The present Government, of course, had to carry out our undertakings and had to pay for the rails ordered. In this connection I would like to remind the Minister for Works that during the last five months of Mr. Daglish's term, that gentleman ordered 415 miles of rails as against the 248 ordered by the present Minister during his first five months of office.

The Minister for Works: You ordered the rails too late.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But you did not order them at all. These rails were already ordered and the Minister should have hurried on the contractors. The increased expenditure was brought about by us. We committed the country to it, and had we remained in office we should have had to meet the increase. The only difference is that we would have got the proposed works under way much sooner than have the present Government. The Minister did not hesitate to take full credit for the work he has done. He recounted the lines and the progress he had made in each of these undertakings. He did not hesitate to credit himself with having cleared a few miles of railway line and put in a few miles of earth-works. He said he had cleared the line from Quairading east. This was a very light job, and I believe he did it under the contract system to some extent. He took credit to himself for having started the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line; but, as a matter of fact, very little has been done in that connection as yet. He was anxious

to show to the House every detail of work for which he was entitled to take credit. I do not blame him for that. But he made a mistake, for he said that to clear a few miles of railway line was a magnificent achievement; leastways, that is what he wished us to believe. The Minister was dealing in half-truths, and a half-truth is worse than deliberate misrepresentation. He said the credit belonged to him for the laying of this 285 miles of railway. But the Minister would have taken credit to himself till the crack of doom, if, as a matter of fact, he had laid 285 miles of railway off his own bat. If these lines had been laid by him and arranged for by him, we should have had him declaring that he laid the rails from Boyup to Kojonup, or from Tambellup to Gnowangerup, or along the Dumbleyung extension. As a matter of fact these lines were arranged for and were already in hand, and it was beyond the Minister's power to retard the work. Although the Government have been in office for ten months they have done very little in the way of new railway construction, except that just recently they have put in hand the building of lines authorised 12 months ago, namely from Wongan Hills to Mullewa, from Quairading east, and from Wickiepin to Merredin. These works have only recently been started, notwithstanding that the Government have been 10 months in office. This motion is justified by the fact that it has taken so long to put in hand works authorised many months ago. It is true the Minister regarded this preparatory work as work not to be undertaken until he was quite ready with his rails and sleepers. Apparently he has now changed his mind and is going to do this preparatory work without waiting for the rails and sleepers in order that the lines might be pushed to a conclusion. The Minister endeavoured to show that the late Government had made no endeavour to push on with railway construction. As a matter of fact, not a single mile of the railways that have been recently completed was arranged for by the present Government. The Minister admitted frankly that he did not expect to do as

well in the future as he had done during the past year. That, of course, was prompted by the knowledge that the past ten months have been barren of any useful work in connection with the preparation for the laying down of new lines. The fact is that the previous Government, by their foresight and by the development of a system which had grown with them, were able to construct lines at the rate of 300 miles a year. The Minister was unable to declare that he was responsible for the railways recently completed, and he frankly admitted that he could not continue at the same rate.

The Minister for Works: I said nothing of the sort.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister said he could not hope to do as well in the future.

The Minister for Works: I said I was doing 16 miles a month more than you could do.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This admission fully justifies the motion moved by the leader of the Opposition. We want these railways pushed on as quickly as possible. The pace at which the Minister is working does not meet with my idea of what should be done. If the Minister were doing twice 16 miles a month more than we did, I should still say that enough was not being done. I have endeavoured to show that the position to-day is very different from that of the past. The Minister for Lands will tell us that there is an increased area under crop, and an increased area being prepared for the crop, and that people who have settled at a distance from existing railways are clamouring for railway facilities. The point is that the Ministry have taken ten months to get under way work authorised during the term of the previous Government. That it was easy for the previous Government to build railways is shown by the fact that the Premier has had opportunity of opening so many during his term of office, and it will be very difficult indeed for the present Government to take up the running at the pace that obtained when they took office. It is all very well for the Premier to smile, and it is all very well for Ministers to say that

they are satisfied with themselves; but it is not good enough for the people of the State that the Premier should treat this important question in so light a fashion. The lines that have been authorised may or may not be laid down quickly. Of course some pace may be shown in the case of the Quairading extension, seeing that the rails and sleepers are there and the line has been cleared and earthworks constructed: but all the same the people out at Mount Marshall, the people to the north of Wongan Hills and the people between Merredin and Wickepin are fully deserving of the provision of railway facilities without delay.

The Premier: Are you one of those on blocks a great way from a railway?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I would never be near a railway if the Premier could prevent me.

The Premier: Will any of these railways serve your land?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not that I know of. I do not know what is in the Premier's mind, but I hope if he can serve my land he will do so.

The Premier: Will not the railway at the Margaret River serve some of your land?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. I am nine miles from Busselton, and I do not suppose the proposed railway will bring me any closer. Nor do I care whether the Minister builds that line or not. At any rate, these personalities are worthy of my friend. If the Premier imagines that I am advocating railway construction because I happen to be a landholder, he is very much mistaken.

The Premier: I was merely throwing out a suggestion.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It seems to me the Premier never does anything else but make suggestions unworthy of the position he occupies. If the House agrees to the motion, it will mean that the Government will be in a position to build railways far more quickly than would otherwise be the case. On the other hand, if the Minister adheres to his determination to build all railways departmentally, he will build slowly and expensively. He has had trouble already in connection with

the men employed on his railway work. He had a stoppage of work the other day at Merredin. It is true that a Trades Hall representative went up to inquire into the matter, and that shortly afterwards work was resumed. What we want to see is the laying down of these lines as quickly as possible. Some of the authorised lines are of considerable importance. I have here a list of the lines authorised during the last session in which the leader of the Opposition was Premier. Many of those lines were in hand when the present Government took office, and some have since been completed, but there still remain to be completed several others mentioned here, particularly those we have referred to to-night. The Premier knows this, because he has been written to and has received deputations from the various centres, and he is aware that unless he is going to do for the people at Dalwallinu and beyond that place, what the Minister for Lands is doing for the people of Esperance, they cannot be expected to produce crops, knowing as they do that the line will not reach them for some time. We passed 649 miles of railway in the early part of 1911. Every one of those lines should be actively under construction if not completed by now. The Minister cannot say that a railway is under actual construction if he has only a few men pottering about, as was the case on the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line.

The Premier: Are you a second mysterious Jansen?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier is so well satisfied with the work he is doing and the millions of pounds he is borrowing, that he cannot take any suggestion seriously, particularly if it comes from a member of the Opposition. The Minister for Works endeavoured to make out a very good case from his own point of view, absolutely without sticking to facts, but his own supporters will probably find out that he has done precious little, so little that very few of the lines he has in hand bear any evidence of the work of the department. The Minister promised that he is going to lay down more lines in the future, but he endeavoured to make the House believe that he has been respon-

sible for the building of an enormous extent of railways. I repeat that he was not responsible for the lines that have been completed during the last twelve months. He is responsible, of course, for the completion of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar line, but Mr. Smith had taken the railway almost to Marble Bar and the Minister sent somebody up to complete it. For the starting of it, and the greater portion of the construction, he cannot rightly claim any credit.

The Minister for Mines: What about the settlers at Esperance?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister for Lands has already considered the settlers there, and considered them illegally. It would be a glorious thing if all the settlers could sell their wheat at some depôt for more than it was worth. Ministers will have to answer for their actions in that respect. It is nothing short of a scandal, that a railway which has been turned down by Parliament should be promised to people if they will go to the district and settle. It is true that they are doing a little farming, and that they were able to sell their crop to the Government above its market value.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Did you not say that it would not produce a crop?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member for East Fremantle will not, at any rate, support a railway to Esperance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Oh, yes, I will.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I repeat that the Government should build these railways with the means that would result in the laying down of the lines in the quickest possible way. A few months ago we heard the Government say that the people had been settled too far east, but to-day, when prospects are good, we hear nothing of that cry. The Premier speaking at Albany the other day, referred to the assured crop prospects. Let me tell the Premier that if the rest of the season is as favourable as it has been to date, his rolling-stock will be taxed to its utmost, and the West Australian average over that million acres will be an Australian average—that is, if the season holds out as it

has begun. There is every reason why these lines should be laid down quickly.

The Minister for Works: That is just why we are doing it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Doing it! The Minister is not doing it at all. I ask the Ministry to listen to reason in this matter, and I also ask hon. members not to be misguided by the vigorous style of the Minister for Works. No doubt Government supporters think the Minister put up a good case last night, but the facts are entirely against him. The Minister for Works is responsible for very little indeed in the way of railway building, but he is responsible for an utterance that will stick to him all his life—that he is doing too much.

The Minister for Works: I said that is what is worrying you; I am doing too much.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister is doing nothing. It is true that he went to the North to inquire into the requirements of the people there, and on his return he did for them just as much as he has done for the settlers in the agricultural areas. I hope members will vote for the motion, because it is necessary that our obligations to these people should be recognised and met.

Mr. DOOLEY (Geraldton): I do not desire to speak at any length, but there has been an assertion made to-night which, if left uncontradicted, is likely to mislead people. It was stated by the member for Northam, that the Opposition when in office were responsible for the initiation of the agricultural railway system for which both parties claim such a lot of credit. The late Government were never tired of holding up that policy as a shining example of what should be done, and of comparing it with the Labour policy. I have a distinct recollection of the present Minister for Works, in October, 1904, when he held the same portfolio in the Daglish Ministry, coming to Geraldton to open an agricultural show, and distinctly stating that it was the policy of the then Labour Government to establish a system of light agricultural railways. I have a distinct recollection also that his remarks were laughed at as being imprac-

ficable, but in that same year the Daglish Government provided for a loan of close on a million pounds for the purpose of building light agricultural lines, and also a sum on the Loan Estimates of something like £200,000 for assistance to immigration. So that when all is said and done, we find that the much maligned Labour party, who are supposed to represent wild and impracticable ideas, were the first to bring this policy into the realms of practical politics. We hear a good deal from the Opposition benches, particularly from the member for Murray-Wellington, about the present Government reaping the harvest which their predecessors had sown in regard to public works, but it will be needless repetition to attempt to say anything more than the complete reply given to that statement last night by the Minister for Works. At the same time, I do not think the fact can be emphasised too strongly that it was the Labour Government of eight years ago who first made agricultural railways a practicable proposition. I well remember that during the election campaign which commenced soon afterwards, the subject of agricultural railways was mentioned by a Labour candidate who was opposing a candidate supported by Mr. Kingsmill, I think, who at that time held some portfolio. At that time we were asking for a light agricultural line, which is to-day an accomplished fact—a line opening up the Upper Chapman valley to meet the requirements of the settlers there.

Mr. Wisdom: Who built it?

Mr. DOOLEY: That has nothing to do with my statement. It has been stated that the last Government were responsible for the introduction of agricultural railways, and I am showing conclusively that it was the Labour Government who initiated the policy and provided money for the construction of the lines. Therefore, so far as the reaping of the harvest is concerned, the previous Government reaped the benefit and credit which was due to the Labour party for the initiation of this grand and great scheme of light agricultural railways. Reverting to the election incident, the pledged Labour candidate was advocating light railways

in the north, and the Minister I have referred to sneered and asked, "What is all this talk about agricultural railways, and what is the necessity for them"? But by the persistency of the Labour party, when sitting in opposition, the Liberal Government were forced to do more than they otherwise would have done. In regard to the respective merits of contract and day labour, that question has been threshed out long ago, and it has been abundantly proved that the most economical system that can be put into execution is the day labour. It is only a question of proper administration, and surely the departments of this State are just as capable as private employers of carrying out public works. Contractors will do nothing without making a good profit, and Government contractors particularly reap very large pecuniary advantages, which I consider should be retained for the benefit of the State. It is a reflection on the officers of the Public Works Department to say that they cannot carry out works as well as a private contractor. That they can do so has been proved over and over again, and I contend that if the Government of the day were alive to their responsibilities, instead of having private rolling stock works in this State, the State could build its own rolling stock, as has been done already to some extent, better and cheaper than it is possible for private enterprise to do. The facts go to show that departmental construction is far better and more economical than contract work.

Mr. George: But that is not the question.

Mr. Wisdom: It is too slow.

Mr. DOOLEY: I imagined that there was no necessity to say anything on that head. The Minister for Works showed conclusively that he is building 16 miles of railway per month more than was ever built by the previous Government.

Mr. Wisdom: That is not enough.

Mr. DOOLEY: The Minister has only two lines of railway out of all those authorised which are not under construction. One of those is held up because it is affected by the Trans-continental railway, and the other one because of a

dispute or misunderstanding with regard to the route. There are only two railways authorised not in hand, and there are good and sound reasons for not proceeding with their construction. If there were a lot of railways authorised and not being constructed as we have experienced in the past under the previous Administration, where railways were authorised for upwards of four years, and nothing was done, there would be some justification for this cry. If it were shown that the Public Works Department did not have records to prove that nearly all the work they have undertaken has been constructed far cheaper and better than has been done by public tenders, there would have been something in the cry, but it is useless for any private member to attempt to elaborate the conclusive and decisive reply given to the mover of the motion. That is all I desire to say on the motion, because to any reasonable person, it is apparent that the statement of the Minister for Works has not been touched upon by way of refutation.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan) : I am not quite sure whether it warrants either the time or the attention of members that this debate should be pursued at greater length, particularly after the very farcical utterance by the member for Northam. Had it not been for the fact that for some reasons which I have not been able to fathom, he gets considerable publicity for remarks which he has made elsewhere, I would not call upon members to proceed further with this debate. For a member to stand in his place and endeavour to lead the House to believe—I am doubtful whether he intended that—but to endeavour to lead the country to believe that the statements made by the Minister for Works last evening, provided by responsible officers of his department, were incorrect and not in accordance with fact, and considering that that gentleman was once a Minister of the Crown, is beyond my comprehension. In fact, the hon. member apparently prepared his speech before the Minister for Works replied to the leader of the Opposition, and it seems that he was so pressed for time that he had not

sufficient opportunity to go over his remarks again, and thus he stuck to them and risked being accused of worrying little about obtaining facts to present to this Chamber. It is useless to continue to protest that the Government are not proceeding expeditiously with the construction of agricultural railways when we have been told definitely and distinctly, and it cannot be controverted, that the present Government are constructing railways at a rate very much in excess of our predecessors, or of any previous Government in the history of the State, and which, when totalled for a period of twelve months, amounts to something like 200 miles a year more than our friends opposite accomplished. The only conclusion one can arrive at is that the members of the Opposition are merely playing a party game. They are not out with a desire so much to make the settlers of this State believe they would have done better, because they will surely appreciate the fact that it is only ten months since they left office, and if they were so keen on pushing on with the construction of agricultural railways, they would have taken the precaution to order the necessary material so that the construction of these lines could be commenced. The material for these railways which they complain should have been long since constructed is only now arriving, and the settlers, as well as the general public, will appreciate the fact that it is nothing more nor less than a part of the political game when sitting in Opposition to try to accuse the Government of not doing as much as they would have done.

Mr. George: You should be a good judge of that.

The PREMIER: As I stated on the Address-in-reply, our friends should first look through their own records and satisfy themselves that we cannot hurl the charge back at them that they are not sincere, because they did not do the same when they were in office. There is no doubt to-day, that the construction of railways is proceeding with greater speed than twelve months ago, and if it is possible to build them at still greater speed to-day that opportunity existed

when the present Opposition were on the Treasury benches. I accuse our friends of being insincere when they submitted this motion. They may be sincere in desiring that their own friends, the contractors, might get some more of the plums they had when the Opposition were on the Treasury benches, and, notwithstanding the statement of the member for Northam, I say the department did not get the construction of railways which they estimated they could construct at a cheaper rate than that tendered by contractors. Is it not a fact that the Boyup-Kojonup railway was let to a contractor at an amount of £6,000 more than the price estimated departmentally? Does that show a keen desire on the part of our friends when they were on the Treasury benches, to carry out the work in the best interests of the State and in the cheapest manner possible? If that were so, it is rather remarkable that the departmental officers were not called to book by the previous Government, and asked for the reason why they should submit an estimate of that kind. We have come to the conclusion long since that, with proper supervision and with a Minister controlling the department who is sincere, with efficient officers and proper control, this work can be done more expeditiously departmentally than by contract, and we have proved that already by the amount of work constructed during the last ten months. If the statements made by the member for Northam are correct, I want to ask the Minister for Works what he has been doing with the money which he has been continuously demanding from the Treasurer. I have experienced a difficulty in finding sufficient funds to keep my colleague, the Minister for Works, supplied for this purpose, and I did not find very much in the way of funds in the Treasury chest when I took control, for the purpose of carrying on these railways. It is true, too, that the present leader of the Opposition was struggling very hard to find the wherewithal to construct the railways at the magnificent rate at which they were constructing them when they left office. Surely they can appreciate the position

of myself as Treasurer in attempting to find sufficient money to keep pace with the demands of the Minister for Works, who is adding 16 miles per month above what they were constructing. If we express that in pounds it will be discovered that it means approximately £30,000 a month more than the leader of the Opposition had to find. We are finding the money and doing the work.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Yet you are limited to 200 miles per annum.

The PREMIER: It is due to the leader of the Opposition that the public should know that his Government constructed 102 miles in one year. I am pointing out the position from the standpoint of the Treasurer. Sixteen miles a month represents a value of £30,000, and that means that we have to find money at a greater rate than our predecessors had to find it, merely for this purpose, and the demands to-day are greater in all directions than previously. I daresay Mr. Wilson has not forgotten the speech he made at Busselton, in which he told the people that if he was returned to power he would do everything necessary for the State of Western Australia for the next century in three years. The leader of the Opposition must know the absurdity of the position, and that the promise he made could not be kept, and he must also know that the statements he has made in his position as leader of the Opposition, and the desire he has expressed that we should proceed with these works at a greater rate, would not be possible if they were in charge of the affairs of State at present. Does he want me, in his patriotism to Western Australia, to be forced to go on the London or some other market and pay a high rate of interest at a time when it is difficult to get money, in order to be able later on to accuse me of having handled the finances of the State without proper care and attention. That is his desire. He preaches patriotism, but it is only bounded by what will suit his party.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition knows the difficulties of financing the affairs of State at the pace we are making, and to ask us to go at a greater

pace is to force us into a position in which we will have to pay a higher rate of interest, and thus provide something for him to hang his hat upon when the Budget is presented to the House. That may be patriotism, and he may be doing it from the standpoint of his party, but we are going to view it from the standpoint of the interests of the State as a whole while we are in charge of the Treasury benches. I am quite satisfied, and I think members of this Chamber and the country are quite satisfied, that we are doing better than our predecessors and as well as is possible under the circumstances. Let me say again, and it cannot be repeated too often, that while our friends opposite attempt to claim a great deal of credit for the policy of constructing light agricultural railways, this policy emanated from a previous Labour Government, and from one of their late colleagues. The ex-Minister for Works, Mr. Dalglish, when speaking on the Ministerial side of the House, said definitely and distinctly that the policy was enunciated by the Labour party and it was no fault of that Government that they had not the time and opportunity to put that policy into operation. Our friends certainly took up that part of the policy because they found it was in favour with the country, and we have continued the policy which was then enunciated, and we propose to continue it until such time as all the settlers who are tilling the soil are brought within a reasonable distance of railway communication. After taking a trip into the country one recess he came back and immediately gave an interview to the *West Australian*, in which he said that the railway Bills authorising the construction of railways during the previous session had not received proper consideration and reasonable inquiry, and that he was satisfied, after going through the district, Parliament had done a great harm to the State. He said the Bills, as a matter of fact, were a mistake. Could we accuse the hon. member of being opposed to the construction of agricultural railways because he held the opinion that the routes provided in the Bills were not the best in the interests of the district or State? He objected to the Katanning-

Kojonup, Wagin-Dumbleyung, and Goomalling-Dowerin routes; in fact he was candid enough to say that none of the routes had been considered sufficiently in the best interests of the districts. Now, we have approached to that stage when the work left by our predecessors has been commenced in constructing the railways authorised by Parliament, and we shall shortly have before Parliament Bills asking for authority to construct a railway from Norseman to Esperance, a railway from Busselton to the Margaret River district, an extension of the Bolgart railway, a railway from Wagin westward, a railway to serve the Mount Marshall district, and an extension of the Kondinin line northerly, and also a Bill, now being presented, to commence the construction of the Trans-Australian railway as promised by previous Governments. That is a fair railway programme for one session, but it is evident at the present pace of the Minister for Works it will not be long before we will have to obtain approval for railways in districts that have long been neglected. I ask hon. members opposite is the Margaret River district one that has only recently been settled? Is it not one of the oldest settled districts in the State? Is not the land to the west of Wagin one of the oldest settled districts in the State? Is it not also a fact that the Wandering district that will be served by an extension of the Pinjarra-Hotham railway is one of the oldest settled districts in the State? The same applies to the country to the north of Bolgart. Yet it remains for the present Government to ask Parliament for authority to give these old settlers railway facilities that have too long been denied them. In fact I want to say at once that I disagree entirely with the policy of throwing open land 30 and 40, and even in some cases 60 miles, from existing railways, with no promise of a railway except a line shown on a map by the Lands Department and issued, perhaps, just prior to a general election, and without any hope of getting railway communication for a number of years, and then complaining bitterly because the settlers cannot make a success of farming operations. In fact, the time

has arrived when we should refuse to throw open land for settlement until we can give the settlers at least some hope of getting railway communication, or until they can put their land to profitable use. I consider the South-West is one of the best districts in the State. Eventually it will probably carry the greatest population of any of our country districts. If we encourage people to go into that district now, under existing conditions they must have large areas and would merely run stock, and then when the time came that we could give them railway communication, and when we would need to have the country settled, as it should be settled, in small areas—because in my opinion 100 acres is sufficient there for anyone to rear a family on, and sufficient to cultivate and work properly—it will be found that the land is held in large areas. This, unfortunately, is the position in the Margaret River district to-day. We have so long neglected that district that we have permitted people to take up the land, and we will find that the railway will serve only a few settlers, and that little or no land will be still available for people seeking land, which in that district is too valuable to be held in large areas. It is not necessary to repeat what the Minister for Works has already made known to the House and the country. We are just as fully aware of the fact that there are many settlers crying out for railway communication as our friends opposite. The leader of the Opposition, when sitting on the Treasury benches, did not require any members sitting on the Opposition side or supporting his Government to assist the settlers to be continually making demands, because the settlers were fully aware of their necessities and placed them before him from time to time. I have already received deputations from districts which previously waited on the then Premier, now the leader of the Opposition, and asked for railway facilities. At that time the hon. member had the convenient method of telling the people that he would send out the Advisory Board. It was always a good way to checkmate a deputation, to tell them one had somebody to put the

responsibility on; but the hon. member did not hurry the Minister for Works in getting the Advisory Board to work, nor did he worry them much to submit a report, so long as it staved off the demands of the district for the time being; in fact he did not hurry to any extent until it was approaching a general election, and then, of course, he took some keen interest in the building of railways by asking the Advisory Board to hurry on with their reports. They did hurry on, and quite a number were submitted just before the general election. The hon. member knows full well he did encourage these people with the belief that they would get railway communication after a very short period, but it remained for the present Government to take up these reports and consider them and ask Parliament to authorise the building of some of the railways. We are adopting a different attitude. We have had too much experience in the past of obtaining authority from Parliament to construct a railway, and showing a blue or red line on a plan, making the settlers believe that this was where the railway was to be constructed, no survey having taken place; and then, when it came to constructing the railway, all sorts of strings were pulled by settlers and others, principally others, surveyors being sent out to survey different routes until we have had as many as five surveys before a route was settled. We want to avoid that; we want to finally decide where a railway shall be constructed before Parliament approves; we want as far as possible to get the survey made in advance of the authority of Parliament to construct the line, so that when Parliament has decided on the route of the railway a Minister will not be warranted in making any alterations from it without first of all getting Parliamentary authority for the deviation.

Mr. George: Parliament can only decide on the plan.

The PREMIER: Parliament can also decide on the information supplied, and it will have an opportunity of hearing from the persons who are dissatisfied with the route while the Bill is before Parliament. If it can be shown by the people in the district that the route is not in

their best interests, it can be brought before Parliament and finally settled in Parliament; but under the old system there was nothing final even when a Bill left Parliament, as it was left to the will or whim of a Minister where the line should go.

Mr. Monger: That should never have been allowed.

The PREMIER: I agree with the hon. member, and our proposal last year for the appointment of a public works committee of both Houses—

Mr. Monger: And my request for a select committee.

The PREMIER: That request was merely for one railway in the hon. member's district, but that railway is not the only railway constructed, or the only public work undertaken by the Government. We want to satisfy Parliament, before we get authority for a work, that the work is in the best interests of the country and district, and no committee can do that better than a standing public works committee. Had the Bill been passed last session much of the appointments of select committees, and much of the accusations that are made by members in both Houses would not have been required, because members would have had the whole facts before Parliament before the Bills were submitted for authorisation. Those States that have not public works committees are considering the advisability of having them, because it is due to Parliament, representing the people, that they should be fully acquainted with the facts before they approve of any work of any magnitude. That is why we asked for a public works committee, but we had to proceed without one; and while we have, as far as possible, endeavoured to follow the advice of our expert advisers, we have never allowed that advice to let us get away from the main point—that any railway constructed shall not be considered merely from the standpoint of the district it will serve, but that it shall also be studied from the standpoint of future railways that will be necessary in adjoining country. That is so that we shall not repeat the blunder made on the Dowerin-

Merredin railway where a large area of land, too small to be served by the construction of a special railway to serve it, is left out of the influence of railway communication, and there does not appear to be any possibility of a railway being built to serve those settlers for a number of years. It is true the member for Northam says he can see no reason why they should not eventually receive railway communication, but we are a long way from that position when we can ask for approval of a railway to serve a district three or four miles on either side of it. Yet when we have attempted to carry out this policy in connection with the Wongan Hills extension we are accused of doing something detrimental, or something in accordance with "our policy of spoils to the victors." Had the railway been constructed on the route laid down by our predecessors it would have left a small piece of country only ten miles in extent, which with a railway through it would have only left five miles on the other side for a line to serve, and it would not warrant Parliament providing money for the construction of that. We have tried to avoid that on every occasion, and have taken the responsibility of it; but I hope the time is not far distant when Parliament will take into consideration the advisability of sharing in that responsibility. While responsibility rests on Ministers, responsibility must also rest with the members of either House. It is due to the Ministers that they should have the approval of the House. I am satisfied that if we brought down a Bill giving the Government authority to build a railway from Wagin westward, without giving any facts or particulars, or any point where it would connect with another railway, Parliament would not be satisfied. It is well that Parliament should have full particulars, and know, when they have the particulars, that the railway will be built on the route outlined until some alteration is found necessary, for which their approval will be sought. The whole motion hinges on whether we should do this work departmentally or by contract.

Mr. George: No.

The PREMIER : The motion reads that it is expedient that contracts be called immediately for all railways authorised by Parliament.

Hon. Frank Wilson : "Already authorised."

The PREMIER : It seems that we could not continue the policy of constructing these railways departmentally.

Hon Frank Wilson : I will accept an amendment to exclude those you are constructing departmentally.

The PREMIER : There is no intention or desire to submit any amendment; the motion cannot be amended to be satisfactory to the members of the Chamber. The question arises whether it is in the best interests of the country that this work shall be carried on by departmental construction or by letting contracts; and the experience we already have to guide us shows that the work can be done cheaper departmentally, and equally as well.

The Minister for Works : Better.

The PREMIER : I think it is fairer to the contractor to say "equally as well." It is for the purpose of pleasing my friends opposite that I say "equally as well." I do not think they will accuse us of doing it "not as well." I do not think the leader of the Opposition would.

Mr. Heitmann : He has made the statement that the contractor does better work.

The PREMIER : I do not think he was warranted in saying it. It is a reflection on the officers of the department, which I am sure is not warranted. In giving evidence before the Royal Commission from South Australia that inquired into this question of light railway lines, Mr. Darker, engineer for railway construction, pointed out that certain lines had been constructed departmentally and others by contract, and in almost every instance the lines constructed departmentally were cheaper than those built by contract. The Goomalling-Dowerin line, 15 miles in length cost £1,060 per mile built departmentally. The Wagin-Dumbleyung line, 25 miles in length, cost £1,053 per mile to build departmentally. In the same district the Wagin-Wickepin, 26 miles in length, cost £1,416 per mile

by contract. The Katanning-Kojonup line, 33 miles in length, cost £1,196 per mile to build departmentally, while the Greenhills-Quairading line, which is in equally good country, cost £1,426 per mile to build by contract. The Newcastle-Bolgart line cost £1,859 per mile by contract, and the Donnybrook-Boyup line, which was built by day labour, cost only £1,554 per mile.

Mr. George : Including rails.

The PREMIER : The comparison is on exactly the same basis. After all the rails are the same price until you buy them in a dearer market.

Mr. George : I am only asking for information; I do not question your figures.

The PREMIER : I want to give the hon. member the figures, and I want to explain that the figures are based on exactly the same quantity of work done either departmentally or by contract. Take the Donnybrook-Boyup line, and hon. members who know anything about that country will admit that it is more expensive to construct a railway there than it is through the Newcastle-Bolgart country, and yet the latter cost £1,859 under contract, while the Donnybrook-Boyup line, built departmentally, cost £1,554 per mile. Is that not evidence that the work can be done cheaper by day labour? Then we must not forget that if it were decided to do this work by contract the contractors would in many cases appeal to the Government to assist them in the direction of lending them plant. Would that expedite the construction of railway lines? So long as the plant is fully engaged, that is all that is necessary. We can only expedite construction of these railways by inducing someone else to come into the field with all the plant that is necessary.

Mr. George : You only lend them a locomotive and trucks.

The PREMIER : We hire to them more than that.

Mr. George : Then they are a poor sort of contractors.

The PREMIER : I do not desire to pursue the matter any further. I again ask the leader of the Opposition whether

it is his wish to endeavour to force the Government to borrow money when the market is not favourable.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is not the reason.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member anticipate that we can find money at a cheaper rate than he could?

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that the reason you are not proceeding with these two railways?

The PREMIER: We are proceeding to-day at a much greater rate than the previous Government.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is not so.

The PREMIER: It is not merely a matter of putting down sleepers and a pair of rails, it is a matter of finding money to do it with, and we are expending as much money as it is wise to do under existing circumstances.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Then that is the reason?

The PREMIER: That is one reason. I do not want the hon. member to try and make the public believe that we are not building railways to-day as rapidly as they have been built in the past. Let the hon. member be candid and say that we are building them faster than they have ever been built before. Does the leader of the Opposition say that the Minister for Works' statement is not true?

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Minister for Works compared the railways handed over in our time with the railways which have been handed over this year, which is a wrong basis altogether.

The PREMIER: The Minister for Works gave a monthly statement and compared it with the period when the Opposition were on the Treasury benches and showed that the present Government were constructing railways at a greater rate by 16 miles per month than the previous Government did. Surely that is evidence of the fact that over a period of 12 months we are constructing 200 miles per annum more than the previous Government did. This matter has to be viewed not only from the standpoint of mileage constructed, but the money to do it with, and I still hold that we are doing all we can in that direction. There is a

time when it is necessary to be wise, even with the expenditure of public funds, and I contend that we are doing all that could be expected of us and more than our predecessors ever did, and even more than they would have done if they had remained in office. They were not concerned about the construction of railways, so long as they got the advertisement from the fact that they had obtained the authority of Parliament for the construction of a number of lines; in fact they never made a boast of the speed at which they were constructing railways; they only boasted about the authority they had got from Parliament. Surely Parliament would not ask us to build railways faster than we are doing. I want to say that the time is not opportune to force the Government upon the market, but the time is not far distant, and when it arrives, this Government will not be fearful to approach those who have money to put into a good sound investment and come to the assistance of this State to construct railways and develop the other industries as a whole.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): The Premier and the Minister for Works to my mind have treated this question not exactly on its merits. I am not now considering whether contracts or day labour is best for the State. The question is, does the condition of the country warrant the extension of railway facilities, and we are all agreed upon that, that an extensive railway policy is not only required, but is fully warranted. The next thing is whether it is wise for the country at the present time to push on that policy by getting the railways already authorised constructed as quickly as possible. So far as I can understand it from the speeches made, the Minister for Works is doing all he can, and, if what he has stated is correct, he is pushing on more work in a given time than has ever been carried out before, and now he finds himself at the end of his tether.

The Minister for Works: I cannot start railways until the material arrives; the material for the lines we are now building is not here yet.

Mr. GEORGE: I can quite understand that point. It must be well known to the Minister, however, that in railway construction, there is plenty of work on which employment can be given in advance of the time when it is necessary to lay the rails.

The Minister for Works: You will admit you can only go a certain distance.

Mr. GEORGE: I will admit that, but this is the question: the policy of the country is that there must be an extension of the railways, and the Public Works Department have got to the length of their tether. The question to be resolved is, although the policy of the Government is that day labour is preferable to contract, and in some cases I agree with the Government and in others I do not, is it not much better, if the requirements of the country need it, to construct by contract the works they cannot do themselves, rather than hinder the progress of the State?

Mr. Thomas: Why do not you practise what you preach?

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about, he has only just been born to politics.

Mr. Thomas: Some people learn quicker than others.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member was born innocent and he has not advanced since the day he was born.

The Minister for Works: You will admit that it will not facilitate matters to invite tenders for a work unless you have the material.

Mr. GEORGE: Unless you have the rails you cannot lay them. But, granted that the Public Works Department have got to the end of their tether with their plants, there are the plants that contractors have in this State and in the other States, which would carry on and supplement the works that the department are not able to do at the present time. But of course, without rails, they can only go a certain distance. It is better, however, that that certain distance should be done in advance of the arrival of the rails.

The Minister for Works: You will not build the lines any faster.

The Premier: Fancy those who could not do these things themselves trying to teach other people.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not speaking of what my colleagues might or might not have done. Let us deal with what the Minister for Works says that what I have suggested would not expedite matters. If a line of 50 miles is to be put down, what harm is there in getting the clearing and formation done in advance and as soon as the rails arrive they could be laid at the rate of half a mile or a mile per day.

The Minister for Works: You can do that after your material arrives.

Mr. GEORGE: You can do it before the material arrives.

The Minister for Works: You can do nothing of the sort.

Mr. GEORGE: My experience differs from that of the hon. member. I am not concerned as to the sins of the former Government, and I am not concerned as to whether the present Government are doing better than the former Government. What I am concerned about is that there are people who have been encouraged to settle on the land and who require railway facilities and that these cannot be given under the day labour system.

The Minister for Works: That is not so.

Mr. GEORGE: I understand it is.

The Minister for Works: Then you are wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman's speech last evening was a clever one and I do not doubt his bona fides, but it was mainly devoted to the fact that "the other side have been black and that we are not as black as they are. We are doing more work than they did, therefore our course of not doing anything more, as desired by this motion, is justified."

Mr. Heitmann: What is a fair thing to expect can be done for a population of 300,000 people?

Mr. GEORGE: It is a pertinent question. Western Australia is a unique example in the history of the world of a people who expect more in the way of railway construction than any other peo-

ple on earth. The railway development of this State has been phenomenal. We want it to go on. So much do we think of our friends opposite that we do not wish to see that shadow of a former Labour Government cast upon them. In other words we have no time for a "mark-time" policy. We want to go forward, and we want the people who have been promised railway facilities to have them. We do not care a hang whether the work be done by day labour or by contract, so long as it is done.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Does this motion refer to what you are saying?

Mr. GEORGE: Yes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Nothing of the kind.

Mr. GEORGE: Again we see that two persons who are both sincere may differ in their opinions. I am not going to discuss the merits that distinguish departmental day labour from contract. My experience of departmental labour was quoted by the Minister last evening in regard to the departmental construction of rolling stock. However strongly we may hold opinions on a certain policy, if the needs of the people require that those opinions should be put on one side for the time being, then those opinions should be so put on one side. If the Government cannot construct railways as fast as the people require, they should adopt some new method.

The Premier: That is a democratic utterance. It is scarcely in accordance with the opinions you held prior to the 3rd October last.

Mr. GEORGE: The opinions I might have held are beside the question altogether. The point is we must put aside this business of day labour if we cannot do the work as expeditiously as may be required. If I were sitting on that side and holding the views of members opposite in respect to day labour, and I found we could not do the work under that system as fast as the people required, I would put aside my opinions on the subject.

Mr. Thomas: Why this hypocrisy?

Mr. GEORGE: There is no hypocrisy about it. The member for Bunbury for-

gets the decency he ought to remember. The hon. gentleman would be better employed outside selling a pennyworth of twopenny-halfpenny pills for one shilling and three pence.

Mr. Heitmann: Have a lysol.

Mr. GEORGE: It may be taken as an indication that one is getting old, when members on that side continually come in with these unwarrantable interjections. Still one cannot blame the rag-tag and bobtail of that party when their leaders set the example.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the hon. member is not referring to members of this Chamber.

Mr. GEORGE: No, I was referring to those outside, but had not finished my sentence.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is very clever.

Mr. Thomas: I think the hon. member ought to withdraw.

Mr. GEORGE: I will when I have finished.

Mr. Thomas: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. SPEAKER: I personally thought the reference was made to members in this Chamber, and I think my inference was correct.

Mr. GEORGE: I am sorry that you made that inference, and that my language caused you to make it. Now, may I ask that the member for Bunbury withdraw his expression that I ought to be ashamed of myself.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw.

Mr. Thomas: I withdraw.

Mr. GEORGE: May I ask that he stand up to withdraw, instead of sitting down.

Mr. Thomas: I have pleasure in standing up and withdrawing.

Mr. GEORGE: Now the atmosphere is clear again. I should like to hear from a responsible member on that side an absolute contradiction of the statement that the Public Works Department cannot do any more works than they are doing now. I have said that if I sat on that side, holding the views which obtain over there on the question of day labour as against contract, I should, if the country desired it, give way on that point. We are ask-

ing them that they, having reached the tether of their powers of performance, should bring in to their aid outside contractors.

The Minister for Works: I have not admitted that; I merely said that we could not have greater expedition by contract.

Mr. GEORGE: I am satisfied that greater expedition would be secured if the Minister would let the work to respectable contractors. There are some contractors to whom the work ought not to be let. The Minister said the other night that one had fleeced him of £28,000. If a contractor fleeced me of £28,000 he would never have the chance of doing so again.

Mr. Heitmann: The Minister did not use the word "fleeced."

Mr. GEORGE: I got it from the hon. member's speech that he had to pay an additional £28,000 on the contract.

The Minister for Works: I explained that certain extras were admitted, to the extent of £21,000.

Mr. GEORGE: Well, what was the £7,000 for?

The Minister for Works: To settle a difference of opinion as between £21,000 and £36,000.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member last night claimed that it proved how much superior day work was to contract.

The Minister for Works: No, I was merely showing that it was unwise to carry out that particular work by contract, on account of the difficulties surrounding it.

Mr. GEORGE: It shows perfectly well that £28,000 was paid for things which the departmental officers discovered as the work went on. These things would have had to be paid for if the work had been done departmentally throughout, and, therefore, in this particular instance there is no difference between the two systems. Assuming that the Public Works Department cannot get further until the rails come to hand; if we were to let any of these lines by contract it would be found, despite the rails not being there, that the contractor would set to work and get everything in readiness for the rails when they should arrive. He would have

his clearing and his formation done, and his sleepers stacked, and as soon as the rails were available he would be prepared to put the locomotive on and get through with it. Contracts have been carried out in Australia in which practically the whole of the formation was completed before any rails came to hand.

The Minister for Mines: Those formations must have been very different from what we have here.

Mr. GEORGE: Let me tell the hon. gentleman that the whole of the formation from Mundijong to Pinjarra, and a great portion of it from Pictou to Yarloop, was done before a single rail was available.

The Minister for Mines: But was it a wise policy?

Mr. GEORGE: It paid the contractor, and it would pay the Government too.

Mr. Heitmann: But it would be cheaper to keep your engines and sleepers up.

Mr. GEORGE: I am speaking from practical knowledge. The formation can be done without waiting for the rails. Suppose there is a big cutting somewhere ahead, what is wrong with going on with that? The gang will not be required for that. It is necessary to lead up to the formation, and as far as concerns the formation of several of the lines the Minister was speaking about last night, the very money he paid for them shows that the clearing was particularly light.

The Minister for Works: That is exactly the reason why you should have your material ready before going on.

Mr. GEORGE: Nonsense. You send the gang ahead to fix camp and go on with the work, and as soon as the rails are there you go right ahead.

Mr. Heitmann: I am beginning to doubt your experience of construction.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member's opinion would not carry very much weight, except among his friends, and they possibly have the same experience as himself, which is very slight. However, that is the question we have to settle, namely, whether or not the Minister should not depart a little from his fixed ideas.

Mr. MONGER (York): I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	9
Noes	28

Majority against .. 19

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Moore
Mr. George	Mr. A. N. Piesse
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Wisdom
Mr. Monger	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McDowall
Mr. Bath	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Dooley	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Swan
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gill	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Holman	Mr. Turvey
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lander	Mr. Heltmann
Mr. Lewis	(Teller).
Mr. McDonald	

Motion thus negatived.

[*The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*]

Mr. A. N. PIESSE (Tooday): I am somewhat at a loss to understand why the Premier and the Minister for Works should attribute party tactics to this side of the House in connection with this motion. I claim that there is ample justification for the motion to be treated on non-party lines. It is not a question of departmental labour versus contract; it is a motion which asks this House to affirm that it is desirable in the best interest of the State that railway construction should be expedited by contract as well as by departmental labour.

The Premier: That is not the motion.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: We have ample evidence from both sides of the House that there is considerable justification for departmental work at certain times and in certain undertakings, but contract appeals to the majority, I hope, when we remember that many districts are languishing for the speedy provision of railway facilities.

I speak in the interests of the man on the land. Many of these settlers have been for some years waiting for railway facilities and if we are to limit the construction to 200 miles a year, it will be sufficient, I feel sure, to dishearten many of those worthy people. The Premier has mentioned this evening a number of large railways which this House will be asked to authorise, and if the Minister is to limit his construction to 200 miles per annum—

Mr. Gill: He did not say he intended to.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I believe that in reply to a deputation the Minister did use those figures as being the limit of construction. I sincerely hope that he will realise the position the people on the land are in, and make for himself a name in the history of the State by stepping it out, and, as well as constructing lines by day labour, also call tenders for the construction of others as speedily as possible. The prosperity of this State materially depends upon the construction of the lines already authorised, and there is no denying the fact that if the farming community are brought into close and speedy contact with the chief seaports of the State, it means good for all and rapid advance generally. My sympathies are with the man on the land, and I maintain that upon his shoulders, and upon his strength and grit, depend at the present time the prosperity and future of this great State.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Are not the sympathies of this side with him, too?

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I believe they are, but only to a limited degree—limited when we consider that it is the intention of the Government to keep construction down to 200 miles of railway per annum. That is the part that worries one in connection with this proposal. We fear that there is not at the command of the Minister, assuming that he has a sufficient staff of engineers, ample labour of the navy class to enable him to push along as speedily as he claims.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Hundreds to spare.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I believe that quite recently the Minister himself expressed that fear. Now, I claim that if the Gov-

ernment wish to inspire confidence in the people, it is desirable that they fix as near as possible the date of construction of each line. I imagine it would not be a difficult matter to estimate the building capacity of the staff, and, even if it is decided this evening that departmental construction shall be adhered to, I should like the Government to give something definite to the man on the land and let him know whether or not he will have to wait two, three, or four years for these lines. If that were done, I am sure these men would be in a much better position, because it is of little use for them to struggle as they are doing in clearing land and cropping if they are only to reap a small measure of the reward that is due to them. In some cases as much as 2s. per bushel has been paid for the carting of wheat, and this year with the good harvest prospects, it is probable that we shall have 113,000 bags of wheat harvested from land 16 miles from a railway line. That clearly proves to me—

Mr. O'Loughlen: Neglect in the past.

Mr. A. N. PIESE: Not so much neglect in the past as the importance of looking to the future, and what is likely to follow when we take into consideration the number of people on the land. I sincerely hope that the Minister will see his way clear to alter his plans in this regard. If he were conscious of the difficulties under which the settlers in distant parts are labouring, he would, I feel sure, alter his plans and at once consider the best means of calling tenders for the construction of some of these lines, which, otherwise, if we take into consideration the work mentioned by the Premier this evening, will be delayed, I fear, for many years to come.

Mr. ALLEN: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not a quarter of an hour since that motion was moved, and I cannot accept it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco): The House has listened to some extraordinary arguments this evening. After listening to the remarks of hon. members opposite one would think the necessity for railway construction in our agricultural areas

had only arisen during the nine or ten months that the present Government have been in office. But as a matter of fact, the necessity for many of these lines and other lines for the construction of which permission has not yet been granted by this House has existed for a great many years past, and we find after all that with all that demand when members who are now sitting opposite had the honour of occupying the Treasury benches of this State, they were not able both by departmental construction and by their pet hobby of contracts, to build 100 miles of railway per annum. With the better organisation of the facilities at their command the present Government have increased that total to something over 200 miles. The Minister for Works and Premier have pointed out that the Government are constructing 16 miles of railway per month more than their predecessors did and if they can keep up that rate of construction for a year it would mean that they would construct in 12 months 192 miles more than the previous Government were able to do. It would mean that they would just about double the amount of construction work in connection with railways compared with the previous history of the State. The question has resolved itself into one of departmental versus contract construction. I was under the impression that the time had gone by when we could find any person occupying a public position who would be courageous enough to contend that contract was as satisfactory as departmental construction. We have only to look around at all classes of public works, leaving aside railway construction for the moment, and take the public buildings erected in the metropolitan area. We find we not only get cheaper work but far more satisfactory work when it is carried out departmentally than when it is carried out by private contract. If we look at the hospital for the insane at Claremont we find that one portion was constructed departmentally and another portion by contract, and we find that although the contract portion is, I believe, not one-half of the age of the other portion of the building, the amount

necessary for upkeep is far in excess of that required for the part which was departmentally built. We find also that the new trades hall, of which we have heard a great deal lately, was carried out under the day labour principle, and has even-tuated in one of the most substantial and handsome buildings we have in the metropolis. Although every workman who was employed on that building was paid a shilling a day in excess of the ruling rate of wages, it was constructed far cheaper than a contractor would have done it for. At the same time we have a building which, I believe, is far more substantially and honestly constructed than any private contractor would have built it. We find also that the large private firms are beginning to realise that they get better results by building their warehouses and other premises on the day labour system, than they do from private contractors, and some of our large business firms in the city to-day are building enormous warehouses, larger than we have ever had erected in the city before, on the day labour principle. Is it not common sense to believe that anyone having a large building of this kind, where he can command the constructive and supervising skill necessary, must be able to do that work not only far more satisfactorily but more cheaply? Is not the contractor's profit entirely eliminated from the position? No one will contend that contractors are public philanthropists. They are in the business for what they can make out of it, and it is understood by everyone who gives attention to the question that the majority of our large contractors do not do the supervising and the practical work themselves, but have to employ the supervising and all the other necessary labour, the same as the Government or any other private individual would have to do. When these works are constructed on the day labour system, the whole of the contractor's profits are eliminated and the person undertaking the work must reap that benefit. Then the incentive for slumming the work, and trying to get over it quickly, and put less material in when the supervisor is not present is also eliminated and we find that better work is

done when it is constructed under the day labour principle. I would like to mention one other item, the result of which I confirmed within the last few weeks. A large wheat shed had been erected on the wharf at Fremantle and a great amount of the plumbing accessories in the shape of down-pipes and guttering, and so forth, had been constructed by contract. I am informed on very good authority indeed that fully 50 per cent. of that work was condemned when the material was placed on the wharf and the balance, which was put into the building, has proved to be defective since the building has been in use. I am informed by those who are in a position to judge that the work could have been done from 80 to 100 per cent. cheaper if it had been constructed departmentally and this estimate was made up from practical experience because a certain amount of the work was constructed departmentally. A large number of other accessories which the Government are using to-day in connection with our sewerage system can be manufactured far more cheaply and satisfactorily departmentally than they can be procured from private firms. Not only can they be manufactured more cheaply and more satisfactorily by the Government, but those engaged in the manufacture of them would work under better conditions and receive a more just remuneration for their labour. We find that a number of these firms, who have contracts at the present time, are employing a great amount of boy labour—more boy labour, I believe, than is provided for in the award governing this class of work. I think that although the Minister for Works stated last night that he was going to continue to take a certain amount of work by contract, he will do well to look into this matter and see if we would not be saving money for the State, and getting better value for the money he is spending if he adopted the day labour principle in its entirety in connection with this work. I do not intend to delay the House at this late hour. I am quite convinced that this motion will not be carried. We have had, I think, sufficient experience as individuals to know that

there is more satisfaction on all occasions in departmental work, or the day labour principle, than can be got from the contract system. With regard to the object of this motion, and the considerations which actuated the moving of the motion, it has been stated by interjection that it was thought the motion was moved out of consideration by the members opposite for their friends the contractors. I believe that may have had some influence with them, but I believe the main object for moving it was to try to draw the Government and the Labour party away from their great principle. Our friends opposite know this principle is so firmly embedded in the minds of the people, and that the justice of it is so well known by the people, that they thought if they could draw the Government away from this great principle of theirs they would cause disruption among the followers of the Government. They thought they would bring about a certain amount of criticism on the Government by those who are supporters of the Government if they could succeed in getting us to depart from one of our fixed principles. I believe that was the main consideration which actuated the moving of this motion, and that it was also backed up by a chance remark which a member sitting on this side of the House let fall at a deputation some time ago. I am not going to detain the House any further. I am sure that the motion will be defeated. There is no necessity for me to express the hope that it will be defeated. I am satisfied that it will be defeated because the common sense, not only of the members of this House, but of the general public, leads them to favour departmental construction as against the contract system.

On motion by Mr. Heitmann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.57 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 13th August, 1912.

	PAGE
Wickepin-Merredin Railway Select Committee, Extension of time	986
Questions: Treasurer's Advance	986
Estates Repurchase, closer settlement	987
Land Transfers	987
Personal Explanation, Hon. C. Sommers and Railway Deviations	987
Return: State Farms	987
Bills: White Phosphorus Matches Prohibition, 3a.	987
Methodist Church Property Trust, Com.	987
Tramways Purchase, 2a.	989
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2a.	1002
Health Act Amendment, 2a.	1004
Game, 2a.	1009
Message: Wickepin-Merredin Railway Select Committee, Power to Confer	1003
Motion: Proportional Representation, Hare-Spence method	1012

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

WICKEPIN-MERREDIN RAILWAY SELECT COMMITTEE.

Extension of Time.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) moved—

That the time for bringing up the report of this select committee be extended until the 27th August.

He said: Last week the House had carried a resolution permitting this select committee to confer with the select committee appointed by another place for the same purpose, and was still awaiting an answer to the Message, which would probably be available to-day. The committee would then be in the position of knowing what to do. The request for a conference had been made with a view to saving expense to the country and inconvenience to settlers.

Question passed.

QUESTION — TREASURER'S ADVANCE.

Hon. M. L. MOSS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What amount of the £250,000 Advance to Treasurer in Schedule "B" to the Appropriation Act, No. 17 of 1912, was expended up to and inclusive of 30th June, 1912. 2, Is any of such expenditure excluded from the deficit in the Revenue Account up to 30th June, 1912.