

# Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1931.

Questions:	Wyndham Meat Works—1, McCoombe's dairy; 2, Stud bulls	PAGE
	Railway rates on artificial manures	4940
	State finance, Commonwealth Bank, interest rates	4940
	Government Printing Office, retirement of employee	4940
	Tramway, Westana road	4940
	Life-saving appliances, pleasure resorts	4941
Bills:	Reserves (No. 2), returned	4941
	Roads Closure (No. 2), returned	4941
	Vermion Act Amendment, 3B.	4941
	Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust, 2A, Com., etc.	4941
	Industries Assistance Act Continuance (No. 2), 2A.	4941
	Local Courts Act Amendment, returned	4903
Annual Estimates:	Votes and items discussed	4941
	Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage	4941
	Railways, Tramways, and Electricity Supply	4952
	State Batteries	4990
	Cave House	4991
	Government Property Trust Account	4992

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

## QUESTIONS (2)—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS.

### *McCoombe's Dairy.*

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What was the total cost of installing the engine and chaffcutter at Mr. McCoombe's dairy at Wyndham? 2, Is the installing cost a charge against the Wyndham Meat Works?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, The chaffcutter was purchased on account of Mr. McCoombe, at a cost to him of about £24. No engine has been installed, but a spare electric motor will be connected, to supply power when needed. The cost of connections is estimated at £5. 2, Yes.

### *Stud Bulls.*

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How many stud bulls have been purchased by the Wyndham Meat Works? 2, How many have been resold to pastoralists in East and West Kimberley separately?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Stud bulls 20, herd bulls 99; total 119. 2, Sold to pastoralists—West Kimberley 7 stud, East Kimberley 83 herd; total 90. Transferred to Moola Bulla stud 7; total 97.

## QUESTION—RAILWAY RATES ON ARTIFICIAL MANURES.

Mr. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that the rate on small consignments of artificial manures has been increased by 10 per cent. 2, Is it also a fact that the rate on small consignments of stock manure has been increased by 25 per cent.? 3, Are the department aware that by such increases motor trucks can successfully compete with the railways? 4, Is it realised by the department that this increase will seriously affect the small growers?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3 and 4, No.

## QUESTION—STATE FINANCE.

### *Commonwealth Bank interest rates.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, What rate of interest is the State being charged for the accommodation provided by the Commonwealth Bank in respect of deficits and loan works since 1929? 2, Is this form of borrowing actually cheaper than borrowing overseas? 3, If neither principal nor interest is met by the States in such loans, would not the relief to taxpayers and industry outweigh the loss registered at the Commonwealth Bank?

The PREMIER replied: 1, 4 per cent. 2, Borrowing overseas is impossible now. 3, No.

## QUESTION—GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

### *Retirement of employee.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, Is Edward Hayes, lately of the Government Printing Office, ineligible for any sort of retiring allowance? 2, Is it a fact he has served the State for 33 years?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes.

## QUESTION—TRAMWAY, WESTANA ROAD.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is there any portion of the tramway system to which the lines and gear of the Westana-road section could be usefully

transferred? 2, In view of the loss occasioned on this section and also of the existence of a bus service, will he investigate the position with a view to early action?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

### QUESTION—LIFE SAVING APPLIANCES, PLEASURE RESORTS.

Mr. RAPHAEL asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that a life was almost lost at Como last Tuesday? 2, Is it a fact that there are no life-saving appliances on the jetty? 3, If so, will he take the necessary action to see that appliances are made available on the river jetties?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, Lifebuoys are always supplied. These are sometimes removed by vandals, as was the case in this instance. 3, These appliances are always made available on the river jetties, and, when stolen, they are replaced.

### BILLS (2)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

- 1, Reserves (No. 2).
  - 2, Roads Closure (No. 2).
- Without amendment.

### BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—SALVATION ARMY (WESTERN AUSTRALIA) PROPERTY TRUST.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.40]: I have looked into this Bill, and I think it is a necessary one. In the circumstances, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

### BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE (No. 2).

*Second Reading.*

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.45] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual short Bill introduced each year to continue the operations of the Industries Assistance Act, which is necessary for the protection of the securities held by the bank. Last year the operations of the measure were continued to the 31st March, 1932, and in the Bill before hon. members, I propose that we shall continue the Act until the 30th June, 1933, which is the end of the financial year. No new accounts have been opened during the year, and the policy of the Industries Assistance Board has not been changed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1931-32.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 29th October; Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

Department of Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage (Hon. J. Lindsay, Minister).

*Vote — Public Utilities; Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department, £114,196:*

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [4.47]: In placing the Estimates before the Committee it will be necessary for me to explain the position. Since I have been in charge of the Metropolitan Water Supply Department, there has always been a fear of a shortage of water. It may interest hon. members to know that even at this period of the year we use 18,000,000 gallons of water per day. Unfortunately the Treasurer has not been able to provide sufficient money to lay down a permanent storage of water. I sincerely hope the time is approaching when we shall be able to construct the Canning weir. A certain amount of money has been made available to clear the dam site, but that work has really been undertaken to employ men on sustenance. Plans and specifications in

connection with the weir are not yet completed, for which reason the work has not been proceeded with. It is our intention to construct a new road to the proposed weir site, so that when work is commenced there it can be continued satisfactorily. Since I have been in control of the department, the Financial Agreement has operated, and under that measure the sinking fund charges have been reduced from 1 per cent. to 5s. in the pound. Certain reductions in rates have been authorised, and in the last two years the sewerage rate has been reduced by 3d. in the pound, and the water rate last year by 1d. in the pound. We found it necessary to increase the storm water rate by 1d. in the pound because of the losses sustained. In that increased rate it has meant £581,000 added to fixed capital. In the past interest on fixed capital has been paid out of loan funds, whereas now interest to the extent of £31,000 per annum has to be paid out of revenue. In order to keep pace with the increased consumption of water, it has been found necessary to sink a bore along Mount's Bay-road. The work has not been quite successful inasmuch as the contract was let to sink a bore 2,200 feet, at which depth it was expected we would get a supply of 2,000,000 gallons per day. A bit became stuck in the bore so we had to stop the work and the water supply available has reached 1,000,000 gallons a day only. Another contract has been let to sink a bore alongside the first one to a depth of 2,200 feet. It is expected that we shall get a supply of 2,000,000 gallons a day from that. Each year the officers of the department, owing to the fear of a shortage during the summer months, have imposed restrictions. Fortunately the weather last year was so mild during the summer months that we were able to carry on without any restrictions whatever. Already this year I have been warned that if the summer is at all hot, it will be necessary to impose restrictions. It is estimated that 28,000,000 gallons will be required to meet the demand in the height of the summer months. During the winter months the bulk of the water used is drawn from hills reservoirs. Churchman's Brook and Victoria reservoirs hold a supply equivalent to 9,000,000 gallons daily for the supply of the metropolitan area, and during the winter months by a system of pipe head dams we can use water from the hills to augment that

supply. When the summer commences we must use bore water to meet the demand. Certain work is in progress at the moment to deal with the old cast-iron mains that have corroded and are extremely rusty. When the mains are taken out, it is amazing to see the contraction of the bore and the amount of rust that is present. The Treasurer has made money available to enable the department to take up some of the worst of the old mains, in order to concrete-line them and so help to minimise the complaints regarding discoloured water. The old pipes are being taken up, reconditioned with cement and replaced. It is hoped that this will decrease appreciably the discoloration in the water supply. It is unfortunate that we cannot at this stage find more money to enable us to take up the smaller mains that were laid in the past. It will be appreciated that in the earlier days extensions were put down in order to supply the requirements of a few houses only. In course of time, the number of houses has multiplied, with the result that the increased draw on the water through the small mains has meant a decreased pressure in the supply. Unfortunately, in times like the present all available money is used for the purpose of employing labour, and when it comes to a question of putting down pipes, the percentage of the expenditure on account of labour is small; and even so, the material and pipes have to be imported from the Eastern States.

Hon. A. McCallum : Why import pipes from the Eastern States?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am alluding to galvanised pipes, which we do not make here. A good deal of the material such as pig iron, cast iron and so on, has to be brought from the Eastern States. In these circumstances, unfortunately, we have not been able to do as much relaying as we desired to do. The metropolitan water supply is not only paying interest and sinking fund, but working expenses, and adding some profits to general revenue. I hope, in the circumstances, that money will be made available in the future to improve the metropolitan water supply. It is most profitable and it is urgent that alterations shall be effected to improve the position. Regarding meter repairs, it is well known to the Committee that meters are not supplied to premises for the purpose of revenue but to restrict the use of water. In fact, a meter acts as a policeman, except in connection

with manufacturing businesses. Unfortunately we have not been able to repair as many meters this year as we desired, and there may be some difficulty later on in connection with the amount of water available. We have given employment to a considerable number of men in reconditioning the 3in., 4in. and 6in. mains and the 2lin. main from the Victoria reservoir. In addition there has been sewerage work, particulars of which will be dealt with on the Loan Estimates later on.

**HON. A. McCALLUM** (South Fremantle) [4.56]: It will be realised by the Committee that the metropolitan water supply is run as a distinct entity, quite apart from any other water supply operations. There was a good deal of criticism at one time because some people thought both sections were operated as Government concerns, and it was considered strange that the rates in respect of one could be decreased and in respect of the other section, increased rates should be levied. The law as it stands provides distinctly that no profit shall be made from the metropolitan water supply, and that the rate has to be so fixed as to balance the operations of the department. The cost has to be met and any overplus of income must go to the ratepayers in the form of reduced rates. The Minister said that the department had made certain profits that had been added to general revenue.

The Minister for Works: That has always been done.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: Very little has found its way to the Treasury in some years, and on occasions the department has failed to make a profit. The law does not render it permissible for the Treasurer to make any profit out of the water supply; hence the reduction in both sewerage and water rates this year. The storm water rate had to be increased because it was impossible to balance revenue and expenditure under that heading. The object of the Act is that there shall be no profit and no loss recorded at the end of a financial year. It is most difficult to balance to a pound, and naturally there is a tendency to play safety, with the result that there may be a little surplus at the end of the financial year. I regret it has been found necessary to revert to the provision of bores for water supply purposes.

The Minister for Works: To revert to that policy?

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: Yes.

The Minister for Works: We have always used bore water.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: The policy adopted when we started the hills water supply scheme was not to sink any more bores and that gradually the bores would be done away with. We find that the present Government let a contract for an additional bore at Mounts Bay-road. That bore did not come up to expectations and a contract has been let for a second bore. That shows that we have reverted to the policy of securing additional supplies from bores. The bore water supply is unsatisfactory in many regards, and I understand it was resorted to on account of the Government not being able to get the money to go on with the Canning dam. They had to provide additional water, and the money they could get was only sufficient for an additional bore, to give an extra two million gallons per day.

The Minister for Works: We must have had the bore just the same, even if we had been able to start the Canning dam.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**. The Minister has not given us any particulars in that regard, and so we have nothing to go upon. The pity is that when Churchman's Brook was started the Canning scheme was not started also. We found the work at Churchman's Brook well in hand when we took over, and it had to be completed. But had the Canning dam been commenced then there would have been no necessity for additional bores. The Engineer-in-Chief told our Government that the dam could be started and the wall raised to a certain height, and that height increased from time to time as required; that there was no necessity to carry the wall to the full height right from the start. If the Canning dam had been started, we should not have had to incur the expense of any further bores. I hope the department is not going to follow the policy of getting back to bore water; for such water is objectionable in many respects. The Minister has not told us whether the million gallons in the bore that has proved unsuccessful is being used or can be tapped.

The Minister for Works: Yes, it can.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: Well that, with the addition of the further two million gallons, ought to assist us over the threatened difficulty, unless there is a considerable increase in the demand. The Minister said there were no restrictions in vogue last sum-

mer. There have been no restrictions in vogue during the last eight years; certainly none as imposed while we were in office, although we did have to sail a bit close to the wind on occasions. So long as we have to rely on bore water and get the supplies from a pipe-head dam, without having the reservoirs to hold sufficient for summer supplies, according to the advice of the experts we sent up to investigate we shall never get over the discoloration in the water; because the water, being full of oxygen, clogs the pipes, and as soon as the extra pull is put on for the summer supply, it displaces the rust and discolors the water. The discoloration is very bad just now; all around the locality where I am living it is just as bad as ever it has been, at all events for years past. The policy of taking up the old pipes and lining them with cement was initiated by us some years ago. It is a sound policy and the only one that will guarantee a permanently clean supply while cast iron pipes are used. Our manufacturers have not been able to make a concrete pipe that will stand the pressure demanded by a number of areas in the city. Consequently the proper thing to do is to take out the old pipes, clean them and have them lined with concrete. The half a million of money which the Minister says he has transferred to fixed capital merely represents the continuance of the policy in regard to all Government works, namely, that during the time of construction and until the work reaches full earning capacity, the capital charged is not fully transferred. Because of improvements that have been made in the metropolitan area very substantial expenditure has been incurred during recent years, and not the whole of the money was transferred to fixed capital until it came fully into use. Each year some of it was transferred, and that accounts for the half million the Minister speaks about. There was the big main laid to take the full flow from the great dam when completed. Of course that meant heavy expenditure for the time being, but it will save a considerable amount in the years to come; because the demand must grow, and the old main was not big enough to bring down the supply when the new reservoir was finished. The department is very well controlled. It comes into touch with the lives of every member of the community in the metropolis, and naturally it is open to a good deal of

criticism. But it is well managed and, I think, economically managed and has given very good service. I hope the Minister will look carefully into the proposal to have a pumping station erected on the foreshore at Crawley. These pumping stations are anything but ornamental. With the sewerage extensions into the Crawley area the plan provides for the erection of a pumping station right in front of the new University College. It will be for the engineers to decide whether it is not possible to put it in some other place. Of course they will hold strong views and maintain that it must go where it is most convenient from an engineering point of view. They do not always take into consideration the unsightliness of any such building.

The Minister for Works: It is a question of levels.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Levels alone will not entirely control it, although it may mean a little additional expense if it is not put at the lowest level. I think the engineers could overcome the difficulty of the levels. With the University developing as it is, and with the erection of colleges, Crawley will become one of the most spectacular areas in the metropolis, and great care should be taken not to have it spoiled by unsightly sewerage pumping stations.

The Minister for Works: They are not unsightly.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I think they are, certainly all those we have are unsightly. It is a question of taste, but they appear to me most unsightly. Then take the City Council's action in erecting that ugly gasometer on the top of a hill, towering up above the city. It can be seen for scores of miles, whereas in other parts of the world such a structure is put down in a hollow.

Hon. P. Collier: And then look at the colour they have painted it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: In other parts of the world every effort is made to hide unsightly structures. Also, I have seen them picturesquely modelled instead of being ugly erections that spoil the whole city landscape, whether viewed from the river or from the Darling Ranges. The advice of the Town Planning Commissioner should be sought in all these matters. He is the professional adviser to the Government on such questions, and I should think before a sewerage pumping station

is dumped down among a lot of University colleges at Crawley—we have only one college so far, but I am given to understand there is a probability of two more being erected—the Town Planning Commissioner should be asked to make some suggestions, and his advice taken on the question. He has engineering knowledge as well as knowledge of town planning—as a matter of fact he was connected with the Water Supply and Sewerage Board in Sydney before coming here—so he should not only be able to give advice from the town planning viewpoint, but should be able also to discuss the question with the engineers. I ask the Minister that the proposal should be thoroughly examined before that sewerage pumping station is put on the suggested site. Will the Minister let us know when the new bore is to be finished, and what the prospects of supply for the summer season are? I understand the rivers in the hills are running better this year than they have run at the same date for a number of years past. That should help the department considerably and with the additional three million gallons daily from the two new bores it should allow the department to overcome any threatened shortage. We should give all encouragement to people to beautify their homes with gardens; the department should be the last to place restrictions on homes made beautiful by the expenditure of a good deal of money and effort. The development of gardens has been remarkable during the last few years. The bore water is not good for any gardening work, yet we in Fremantle have to put up with it. It shrivels up all foliage that it touches, and I am afraid it is not too fresh. We were unable to get the money to bring a main from the hills down to Fremantle while we were in office, and I do not suppose the present Minister is in any better position than we were. On the whole the department has done good work, but I regret it has been found necessary to go in for additional bores. I shall be glad to hear that the policy of the department has not been altered, that the objective is to have exclusively a pure hills water supply for the metropolis.

**HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder)** [5.15]: It would appear that the residents of the metropolitan area are likely to experience a

considerable shortage of water supply during the coming summer. I was sorry to hear the Minister announce that he would not be able to carry out the real aim, namely, the enlargement of the service mains more particularly in the higher levels of the suburbs. Only last week, when we had two fairly warm days—not what might be called really hot days—the pressure at Mt. Lawley, and no doubt on other high levels, was almost non-existent. If that is the position so early in the summer when the draw of water for gardening purposes is not so heavy as it would be in the height of the summer, the people on the higher levels seem destined to have no supply for domestic purposes, let alone for gardening. It would be well if some of the money being expended to provide work for the unemployed and in other directions were, even at this late hour, diverted towards enlarging the mains in some of the outlying suburbs, which are more in need of it than others. I can foresee that there will be restrictions, and pretty drastic restrictions, on the use of water before the summer is over. If it is anticipated that the daily consumption on some of the worst days will be 28 million gallons, we can be almost certain that the department will not be able to meet the demand. Consequently people will have to put up with the inconvenience of being restricted in the use of water when they most need it. If there is one thing the capital city must have, it is an adequate water supply. It would be well to investigate the question whether some of the money about to be expended to provide work in different parts of the State might not be utilised to commence the Canning dam. Once a scheme such as the Canning dam is commenced, years must elapse before it can be completed, and some years must pass before any supply at all will be forthcoming from it.

The Minister for Works: Four years.

**Hon. P. COLLIER**: It is not solely a question of how we are going to get through this summer; we have to consider four years ahead. Although we might squeeze through this summer with the additional water available from another bore or two, and with heavy restrictions imposed upon consumers, we cannot continue year after year. There is every appearance of a real water famine before a supply will be available from the

Canning reservoir, unless a commencement is made with the work at once. If the commencement of the work is to be put off for another year, the four years will date from that time, and if it is to be delayed for two years, the period will date from two years hence. I hesitate to think what the position will be in the metropolitan area in the course of four or five years, even though all the bore water that it is possible to draw is made available. It is bad enough to have to use bore water—we ought not to be compelled to use it when there is an ample supply of good water in the hills, if only the works were constructed to supply it—but it is still worse to have an insufficient supply or a water famine, even with the bore water included, and this, it appears, will be the position before the Canning scheme is carried out. I urge the Minister to bring the matter forcibly before the notice of his colleagues—the position of the metropolitan water supply in four or five years' time, and also the inadequate supply at present, although we have hardly entered upon the summer. A shortage of water is not fair to the people who have to pay their rates. Although water is not available, people are warned and cautioned for not paying their rates.

The Minister for Works: It is a very good department for getting in the rates.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is idle for the consumer to explain that water has not been available to him; he is threatened that unless he pays within 14 days or some other specified period, action will be taken for the recovery of rates and payment for excess water. If people pay their rates, they are entitled to have a supply. I impress upon the Minister the urgency of the matter, having regard to the fact that no water will be available for four or five years, even if the work were commenced at once. The Minister should endeavour to spend some of the money that is, or may become available, on commencing the Canning scheme. I also agree with the member for South Fremantle regarding the undesirability of placing buildings on the river front. Certainly they are not hideous buildings, but they are by no means architecturally beautiful. If we are to have a building there, let us vary the design and make it like a nice little romantic cottage. We do not want the style of building that has been erected on some parts of the Esplanade. It is undesirable that the foreshore should be crowded with buildings

of any kind. We have already gone too far in allowing buildings to be erected on the water front. There are wood and iron barns that should never have been permitted, and there was no excuse or justification at all for permitting the erection of some of them. If I had my way, I would insist upon their being removed as soon as possible. It could be done without any inconvenience to the people who now occupy or make use of them. Looking across from South Perth to Barrack-street or looking southwards down Barrack-street, the sight is not very impressive, on account of those old wood and iron barn-like structures, many of which should have been burnt down years ago.

The Minister for Lands: One was burnt down and was rebuilt.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It should not have been rebuilt. It may not be so difficult to have them removed in time, when other sites can be made available. But once we fix a pumping station there, with all its machinery, connections, pipe-laying and sewerage established, it is there for all time. It is not a building that is likely to be removed in a year or two, or in a generation or two. The cost of removing such a building would always be a strong argument against any alteration being made. Consequently we should not permit ourselves to construct any works or buildings on the water front if they are of a permanent character and likely to remain of a permanent character. The matter should be carefully considered, and we should not rush into it as was done when the river was selected as a site for the filter beds. That work was rushed into without investigation, and we have learned to our great inconvenience the mistake that was then made. I hope that the Minister, before finally agreeing to the proposal of the engineers, will give the matter further consideration. I have no desire to criticise the engineers, but it is their business to get the work done at the cheapest possible cost consistent with efficiency. It is not for the engineers to recommend the erection of a pumping station that will cost £2,000 more than one that could be erected on a certain site. The river is one of the most beautiful sights in Western Australia, and Crawley Bay, when the University buildings are completed and the colleges erected, will doubtless be very beautiful. I doubt whether there will be a more beautiful spot in any other part of Australia. So it is highly desirable that the

river front should be kept free from buildings if it can possibly be done. If we must have a building, let us have one of real architectural beauty. I hope the Minister will consider this matter before reaching a final decision.

**MR. H. W. MANN** (Perth) [5.26]: One of the most important facilities in any city is surely the water supply, more particularly in a city where the sewerage system is being extended. One hesitates to think what would happen if the water supply failed in that part of the city where the sewerage system operates. A great proportion of the water supplied to the city is required to flush the sewerage system. Twelve years ago there was considerable agitation for an increased water supply. Meetings were held weekly in various parts of North Perth and Mt. Lawley to protest against the inadequate supply. Gardens were allowed to fade away in the summer; all the attention that owners had given to their homes during the winter was wasted because of the inadequate water supply. Then the Churchman's Brook scheme was constructed, and that increased the supply to the requirements of the present day. But the sewerage system is being extended considerably, and there will be an increasingly heavy draw upon the water supply. It is true that we have bores to supplement the supply, but I think, with the Leader of the Opposition, that that is not a supply upon which we should depend. Bores have been known to give out. If we were relying for the summer supply upon bore water and one or two of the bores gave out, what would be the position of the city? From a health point of view it is essential to have an adequate supply, especially in a city where a sewerage system is in operation. Leaving out of consideration for the time being the gardens, which are such an asset to the homes, a sufficient supply must be available to meet domestic requirements and serve the sewerage system. A good deal of controversy has appeared in the newspapers about the discolouration of the water, but in the opinion of those who should know, it has no ill-effect, and I am not much concerned about the discolouration. But I am concerned to know how the city is going to be provided with an adequate supply for future years. While we

have sufficient for the day, surely with our growing population and the extension of the sewerage system the Minister should satisfy himself that there will be an adequate supply for the next four or five years. Material now is cheaper than it has been in years gone by. I have in mind the use of cement for concrete in this connection. Whether there is reason for the prohibitive tariff on galvanised pipes I do not know.

**Hon. A. McCallum**: The cast-iron pipes are all made here.

**Mr. H. W. MANN**: I had in mind more the cast-iron pipes, material being cheaper. Again, there is local cement available for concrete and general construction work. Labour, too, is not as expensive as it was two or three years ago. Therefore the construction of the Canning weir should not prove as costly as the work at Churchman's Brook. In any case, if there is loan money available, I suggest to the Minister that he give every consideration to water supply. The departmental figures go to show that the Canning supply, when established, will be sufficient for the metropolitan area over many years to come. Although the work will take some years to complete, it would be wise to make a start soon. The extension of the sewerage system to the suburbs must especially be borne in mind. I make these remarks because I realise the seriousness of a shortage of water, particularly in summer. Although it has never yet occurred, the bores may give out, and there might be very awkward consequences if the sewerage system broke down owing to a water shortage.

**MR. MILLINGTON** (Mt. Hawthorn) [5.32]: If there is a question on which one should take a long view, it is the question of metropolitan water supply. We have had warnings in the past. I remember that as late as the summer of 1923-24 water supply was the question in the metropolitan area. The people in the suburbs were then in dire distress and difficulty owing to the fact of our having got behind with the hills water supply. I presume that was one of those things which had to be brushed on one side owing to difficulties arising out of the war. Fortunately, however, during the time of the Labour Government loan funds were available. If I remember rightly, during one year over half a million was spent on the hills water supply. Thus it was possible to bring



the metropolitan water supply somewhere near the requirements of the people. Even then, however, recourse had to be had to bores. Bores are not as economical as would appear at the first glance.

The Minister for Works: They are not.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is always difficulty regarding the pipes, and reticulation gets into a frightful mess owing to the utilisation of bores. Whereas in times past we could quickly bring the hills supply up, loan funds being available, if in future we get behind with our water supply, it will be impossible on present appearances, to secure sufficient money to bring the supply up to date. The Government have money which is being spent on water schemes. I do not think they should cultivate the fad that money must be spent in the country districts. The money should be spent wherever it can be spent most wisely. If it can be shown that it is a better business proposition to increase the city water supply rather than embark on irrigation schemes which have not proved too successful in the past, the Government might well reconsider the matter. If in the city we again get to the stage at which we were in 1923 and 1924, especially in view of the great increase in the metropolitan population, it will probably be impossible to get sufficient funds to allow of the hills water supply being increased as was the case formerly. We certainly look to the Government and to the department to take a sufficiently long view to avoid the distress and difficulty which faced the people of the metropolitan area seven or eight years ago. Again, bore water is ruinous to plant life. If the gardens and parks of the metropolitan area are to be kept up, it cannot be done on bore water. At least, that is my experience. I believe, moreover, that the residents of the metropolitan area are prepared to pay for an adequate and efficient water supply.

Mr. Sleeman: They pay now.

Mr. Raphael: They have to pay in any case.

Mr. MILLINGTON: In 1923-24 the position was so desperate as to lead to a suggestion that metropolitan householders themselves would be prepared to finance a proper scheme of water supply from the hills. It was suggested that they be levied upon to the extent of £5 per household to furnish the money required for the scheme. Now, I presume, they are not aware of the shortage that is likely to occur. Only the departmen-

tal officials can speak of the enormous increase in consumption. In 1923 and 1924, speaking from memory, 16,000,000 gallons represented an extremely heavy day. We have increased that quantity by about 10,000,000 gallons per day at the peak period. Therefore the trouble, great as it was in the past, seems to be becoming more serious. There is no other Capital built on sand as Perth is, and therefore able to consume water to the same extent. Water must be available if the gardens are to be kept up. If they are to be allowed to die each year, it becomes a calamity. If we fall behind, we shall have to do year by year what ought to be done by way of increasing reservoir accommodation in the hills. A great deal of that work is purely labour. Even the concrete means quarrying, and local material would be used. Omitting the pipe-line, most of the expenditure on a reservoir would be on work complying with the condition laid down by the Government, that 50 per cent. of the money is to be spent on labour. Directly or indirectly, the extension of the reservoir in the hills on the lines of the departmental policy would be good work from the point of view of Western Australia. It is an entirely different proposition from some of the schemes put up, where a large percentage of the money would be spent on material. The Government should place that view before the department. I agree with the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) that knowing the limited funds available, departmental officers are disposed to put up propositions best calculated to get the country out of its present difficulties with the least delay; but we have to look a little further ahead. However money is raised, a special scheme should be put up and a special case made out of rendering funds available for the extension of the hills water scheme. Looking around, I see no scheme more likely to prove a sound business proposition than the hills scheme for a metropolitan water supply. Many of the schemes suggested will not bear examination. Some of them have been put up hurriedly, and no one outside Government circles has been consulted very much regarding them. The Government will have no excuse if they do not do their utmost at this period to obtain a policy which will mean a reasonably rapid extension of the hills reservoir scheme. Very few of the schemes nowadays submitted will bear examination, but I am positive that this one will.

**MR. KENNEALLY** (East Perth) [5.43]

It seems to me a serious state of affairs has arisen when after only two moderately hot days we find the metropolitan water supply seriously diminished during the peak period. On the higher altitudes of the city, indeed, it was almost impossible at those periods to get any water at all. Mention has been made of the fact that earlier in the history of the city, residents used to hold meetings with a view to trying to get the supply of water increased. Nowadays the people are faced with two difficulties. Firstly, there is the shortage of water. Secondly, there is the question whether they should hold meetings to urge an increased supply, seeing that so far they have received through the pipes sufficient top-dressing for their lawns. The most reasonable-minded people must regard the water now being supplied to the city as a disgrace. I do not know what the Government propose to do in order to effect an alteration; but of the small supply the people at present obtain, they have to allow a considerable proportion to run away before they can obtain such water as is fit for use. Much of the water supplied is useless from a hygienic point of view. I cannot endorse the statements of the member for Perth (Mr. H. W. Mann) regarding discoloured water. He has made inquiries, and has learnt that such water is not detrimental. He should, however, consult the people who have to wash clothes with this discoloured water, and ascertain from them whether the water is having a detrimental effect. It may be that the human system requires the rust that is in the water and is being conveyed to the public through the pipes; but I doubt that.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Is it iron or mud that the system requires?

Mr. KENNEALLY: As a matter of fact, I cannot conceive the idea that the human system requires that which is passing through the pipes at the present time. Many people, when turning on their taps, have to wait a considerable time before clean water passes through. Thus, a considerable quantity of water runs to waste. Many people are obliged to do this in order to get clean water eventually, though the department, of course, will not suffer by reason of that waste, which is registered by the meters. The coffers of the department will be swollen because of the necessity of the people to allow the dirty water to run to waste so that they may eventually get the cleaner fluid. A fair

amount of money is being spent now on making additional sewerage connections. This work will increase the consumption of water, and if the existing supply is going to be called upon to provide extra water for new connections, I do not know what the people in the city will do if there is a shortage during the hot months. If we permit the existing state of affairs to continue much longer, we are bound to experience a water famine in Perth, and if that should come about, as predicted by the member for Perth, there will be not only a shortage for domestic use, but the effect will be most detrimental by reason of the non-operation of the sewerage system already connected up and being carried out. I plead to the Government to give attention to the provision of an adequate supply, so that Perth may not suffer during the summer months.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [5.48]:

On the subject of drainage there is one matter to which I would draw the attention of the Minister. A fortnight ago last Sunday I met between 60 and 70 settlers along the old Kalamunda-road. These people are concerned about the question of drainage. The area has been settled to a considerable extent of late, and the settlers are using that road very frequently, and particularly in the early hours of the morning when produce is being taken to the market. The settlers find it difficult to get over the road. Right across the old road, which branches off the main Ascot-road at Belmont, there is about a quarter of a mile of water lying about; in fact, it is like a lake across the main road. I am sure that if the Minister discussed this question with Mr. Tindale, something could be done. As a matter of fact, I drew Mr. Tindale's attention to it a fortnight ago and he agreed to look into the matter. I understand that one or two surveys of the area were made several years ago, but nothing has ever been done. The low-lying country prevents the water from escaping. Further on, where possible, drainage schemes have been carried out, and the water has been banked up more during the last few years than hitherto. I am sure that some relief could be afforded if the department would initiate a partial scheme of drainage. I do not think much material would be required, though I am not certain whether it would be necessary to make any resumptions. The survey, however, would

disclose that. I ask the Minister to give consideration to this matter, seeing that the locality is being developed by people who are all on small holdings.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mount Marshall—in reply)** [5.50]: I assure members that one of the most important questions that is agitating my mind is that of the water supply for the metropolitan area. I can further assure members that the engineers of the department do not want artesian bores put down; what they are advocating is the completion of the Canning dam. A considerable amount of work has already been done, but it is not possible to go on until the plans are completed. At the present time we are putting in a new road to the dam, and that will be available when we are ready to start operations again. There is a road now but it is most unsuitable for the carting of large quantities of cement. Some time ago Cabinet decided that Mr. Ritchie, who several years ago reported on the hills water supply scheme, should now be asked to advise on the plans as completed, and in accordance with the engineer's ideas the plans are now being altered, and it is expected by the water supply engineers that the altered proposal will greatly increase the holding capacity of the dam. Unfortunately, however, it has not been possible to resume operations, and it will take some months before a start can be made. The original estimated cost of the dam was £1,200,000, but no money has been provided except to clear the site and build the road to the dam. That money could very well be spent now, and it would mean the employment of a considerable amount of labour which would be an important matter in times like the present. I agree that until the dam is completed there will always be difficulties experienced in connection with the water supply during the summer months. I am not prepared to admit, however, that there is a difficulty to-day. Our maximum consumption now is 18,000,000 gallons daily. I will tell the House what has happened. Since I became Minister we have put down one bore which gives a supply of 1,000,000 gallons daily, so that we have that much more than was available two years ago. Another bore that we are putting down will give us 2,000,000 gallons a day. Even if we started

the Canning dam to-morrow, it would be seven years before the work was completed, and four years before any water was available. We must look ahead, and I assure the House that the engineers are very much concerned. Last year they were most insistent that I should insert a notice in the "Gazette" imposing restrictions on the use of water. If we experience a sustained heat wave, the consumption of water increases tremendously and the pipes are not capable of carrying it. The consumption of water during 1930-31 was drawn on at an average of 10,312,337 gallons per day. That was a decrease of 7.7 per cent. as compared with the previous year. The estimated consumption for the current year, under normal conditions, is 12,000,000 gallons per day, with a consumption in January of 20½ millions gallons per day, as compared with 18.9 million gallons per day in January, 1931. With hot weather in January a consumption of 24,000,000 gallons per day may be expected as an average for the month, with a maximum day's consumption of 28,000,000 gallons. The sources of supply available will be severely taxed in ordinary circumstances. This year, however, owing to the scarcity of money, it will not be possible to maintain the percentage of metering considered necessary efficiently to control the supply. The available existing supplies are—

	Million galls. per day.
Mundaring .. ..	.8
Victoria } ..	9.0
Churchman } ..	10.3
Existing bores .. ..	20.1
Total .. ..	20.1

The bore that was completed at the close of the year reached a depth of 1,337 feet, and the average output, as I have already said, is 1,000,000 gallons per day. An additional new bore is being sunk in King's Park, near the Swan Brewery. It may be necessary to impose restrictions early in the summer to ensure spreading the available supply over the whole of the summer. Again, that may not be necessary. It was not necessary last year. The position in connection with the bore is that the contract was let for it to be sunk to 2,300 feet. In the metropolitan area there is an artesian strata at a depth of 3,000 feet that has not been tapped, and it was estimated to

get over 2,000,000 gallons a day. Unfortunately, the contractor lost the bit in the bore in the course of operations, and not being able to recover it, we came to an agreement to accept it as far as it had gone. Another bore is being put down close by and this is to go to a depth of 2,300 feet in the deep strata. It will not interfere with the present bore, but both will merge into one and the water will be pumped to the reservoir at Mt. Eliza. The position with regard to the Canning dam is that, when it is completed, it will store four times the quantity of water held at Mundaring. That will certainly keep the metropolitan area going for a long time. I hope that within the next year it will be possible for us to raise some loan money with which to start operations there. As I have already said, Mr. Ritchie, who was consulted by previous Governments and who recommended the construction of the Canning dam, is being asked to advise us as to whether the existing plans are suitable for the job. When we get his opinion we can go on with the work as soon as money is available. Unfortunately, we cannot start the work to-day. If we could we should absorb a great amount of labour. The work is very urgent as far as the metropolitan area is concerned. Regarding rust that is coming from the pipes, this has been going on for very many years, but before I can deal with the matter we shall require a quarter of a million to enable us to pick up the small pipes in the metropolitan area and replace them with bigger ones.

Hon. P. Collier: That would be to complete the job.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course. These pipes were put down when there were fewer houses.

Hon. P. Collier: You might start off in a small way.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are getting on with it as far as we can. The Treasurer has made a sum of money available for pulling up the old and rusty pipes, and in many cases for substituting bigger pipes. The pipes are taken to the Subiaco depot and cleaned out, and the Hume Pipe Company then prepares them for use again. No one seems to know exactly what causes rust in the pipes. Rusty water is more apparent when little water is used. One does not see the rust in water to the same extent during the summer months. The rush

of water through the pipes then seems to take the rust with it, and the corrosion grows less with the quantity of water passing through. I admit there is grave cause for complaint on Mondays, because that is washing day. The extra volume of water disturbs the rust in the pipes and discolours the water to a greater extent. With regard to Crawley, I am in touch with the engineers on the matter. One sewerage scheme deals with Nedlands and Hollywood, both of them being low-lying places. The high levels of Nedlands and Hollywood are already sewered. This scheme takes in the low-lying portions of those suburbs. The level of the sewerage is below the pipe level. The sewerage must therefore be connected at the lowest points, and pumped up to a higher point to connect with the rest of the sewerage system. The engineers told me this morning that if Crawley and that portion of the area is ever to be sewered, it will be necessary for a pumping station to be established at that point. A pumping station cannot be erected higher than the sewerage level, and it therefore means that the sewerage has to be run down by gravitation. I am inclined to think the matter is one we might hold over. I am afraid I cannot hold out any hope to the hon. member with regard to the points he raised about drainage. It is not possible to get any money this year to drain the area referred to. I will cause an investigation to be made. A considerable amount of money has been expended on the metropolitan water supply for future use. We have spent £377,338 on the work mentioned by the member for South Fremantle in connection with the Canning dam. That money will not be required to be spent again. We have spent £149,175 on the Subiaco storm water drainage. That deals with the whole of the area when it is brought into the rating. It also deals with the sewerage drains.

The Minister for Lands: Are they lining the new pipes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Practically all of them. The expenditure is one of the reasons why we were not able to reduce the water rate. By allowing the £556,000 to remain a charge against loan funds, it does not come, in the ordinary course of events, in the general fixed capital of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage until the Canning dam is finished. By leaving it in loan funds it means that every year interest and compound interest are charged, and within seven or eight years the

money will be about doubled. Because of the Financial Emergency Agreement we were able to reduce the sinking fund on these charges about 5s. in the pound, and that meant it was possible to reduce the rates still further. It was thought that this floating capital should be transferred to fixed capital, and that it should be a general charge on the rates in the metropolitan area. That amounted to £31,000 in the year. Had that not been done the rates could have been decreased further. I want hon. members to know that the department does not believe in bore water. The officers want to start the Canning dam as soon as possible. I have been Minister of the department long enough to know that they are right. One of the most urgent works we have to start is the building of a reservoir in order to give an assured water supply for the metropolitan area. As things are, during the summer months we have continually to go to great expense in pumping bore water, which is not altogether satisfactory. We cannot start the Canning scheme until the plans are completed. I hope they will be completed within two or three months. I also hope that Mr. Ritchie of Melbourne will pass the plans, and that if the money is available next year the work will be started then.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes — Other Hydraulic Undertakings chargeable to revenue, £21,731; Perth City Markets, £675—agreed to.*

*Vote—Railways, Tramway and Electricity Supply, £2,612,400:*

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS**  
(Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands) [6.5]:  
In introducing these Estimates of expenditure for the current financial year I ask members to notice that we anticipate a reduction both in expenditure and in our earnings. The reduction in expenditure has been rendered necessary because of the falling off in our earnings. For the year ended the 30th June last the actual revenue was £3,198,913. The working expenses amounted to £2,610,839, leaving a net revenue of £588,074. The interest chargeable against the capital expenditure of our railway system amounted to £968,066, which left an actual loss of £379,992. For the previous year the loss was £404,489, after allowing for interest.

We were, therefore, better off last year by £24,497 as compared with the previous year. The tramway revenue to the 30th June, 1930, was £304,051. The working expenses amounted to £260,997, leaving a surplus of £43,054, above working expenses. The interest chargeable against tramway capital was £52,421. If we add interest we find there is a loss of £9,367. This was worse by £12,644 than the previous year, which showed a profit after interest had been paid of £3,277. In the case of the Electricity Department, the earnings amounted to £280,715. The working expenses came to £212,076, leaving a surplus of £68,639. The interest charged against the undertaking amounted to £60,922, and this left us with a profit after interest and working expenses had been accounted for of £7,717. This compared with the previous year was worse to the extent of £9,152. In other words, the profit for the previous year, after paying interest, amounted to nearly £17,000. The total earnings of the railways, tramways and electricity supply put together amounted to £3,783,679. The working expenses came to £3,083,913, leaving a surplus of £699,766. The interest came to £1,081,409. The loss on the whole of the departments controlled by the Commissioner was therefore £381,643, after making provision for the payment of interest. This year we estimate that the loss will be £225,000, and we anticipate we shall be better off than last year by £56,643. With regard to railway expenditure for this year, we are estimating it at £2,150,000. This is unquestionably one of the departments that is a better barometer of our financial position than any other. Under the conditions which have prevailed in recent years, it is not quite as true a guide as it is in normal times. That unfortunately is due to road competition, and to a fair amount of the traffic, that would normally have been shown in our earnings, passing us by. That traffic has now been diverted to other sources, and the department is not quite the same sort of barometer as it was in previous years. The tramways are suffering in the same way. Our estimated expenditure there is £244,000, which is a reduction compared with the previous year, and this too is due to a falling off of available traffic through outside competition. The estimated expenditure on ferries is £9,400 and upon electricity supply £209,000, or a total estimated

expenditure under all these heads of £2,612,400. The actual working expenses and interest chargeable this year will amount to £1,105,600, or a grand total of £3,718,000. The estimated revenue from the railways is £2,900,000, from the tramways £306,000, from the ferries £10,000, and from the electricity supply £277,000, a total of £3,493,000, to meet working expenses and interest estimated to come to £3,718,000 for the year, or a net loss of £225,000. In connection with the railways, I have taken the view, and probably this will apply at all times, that the responsibility of the Commissioner is greater than it would be in normal circumstances. As a matter of fact, the responsibility is largely his. I admit that the Commissioner in this State, is not entirely responsible. Probably the same can be said of commissioners throughout Australia. It is not quite fair to say that the responsibility is entirely theirs. Parliaments in Australia have viewed the railway systems, not entirely from the standpoint of earning or utility departments, as would be the case if they were operated by private companies. They are also viewed from the standpoint of providing one of the methods by which the Governments, acting for the people, may render assistance to those who are establishing industries and may also develop the more remote parts of the State. There are some portions of our railway system in Western Australia which it was never expected would pay for a lengthy period after construction, nor in some cases was it expected that they would return sufficient revenue to pay working expenses. This applies to one or two district railways.

Mr. Kenneally: In the other States an allowance is made for that sort of thing.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. An allowance is made through the Treasury. The extra charge on the Commissioner is imposed in the form of taxation upon the general community. This is viewed from the standpoint of the assistance that is rendered to the community for the development of various parts of the State. In Western Australia until recently we had a fair mileage of railways constructed on the goldfields. In some cases lines have had to be closed owing to the fact that over a number of years our gold mining industry has been on the decline. The actual cost of those lines, however, is

still a charge against the system, and this has to be met by the Commissioner.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I made some references to the fact that the financial burden of the State is largely that involved in the operations of the railway system. I may be able to make the position more definite if I state that the capital amount charged against the railways represents £24,083,950; against the tramways, £1,103,000; and against the electricity supply, £1,265,000. That gives a total for the three departments of £26,452,000, or nearly £26,500,000. It will be understood that according as the operations of the railways, tramways, and electricity supply activities vary, so the finances of the State are favourably or unfavourably affected. The interest bill for this year against the railways, tramways and electricity supply represents £1,106,000, while the total interest bill chargeable against the State for all its loans amounts to £3,257,000. Thus, for sources other than the railways, tramways and electricity supply, £2,151,000 has to be found. If we add to that the estimated shortage in the earnings by the three departments I am dealing with—the amount this year is £225,000—it will mean that we will have to provide interest representing £2,376,730, quite apart from the three departments under discussion. That has a serious effect on the financial position.

Mr. Kenneally: That is a good argument in favour of the reduction of the overseas interest.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Perhaps I had better not enter into a discussion as to whether we should meet our overseas interest bill fully, in part, or not at all, at this stage. Unfortunately, due to a large extent to the general conditions prevailing in industry throughout the State, our railway traffic, both passenger and goods, has fallen off considerably during the past two years. Last year the passenger traffic fell from 14,175,000 to 11,702,000, or a decrease of nearly 2½ million passengers for the year. Then again the earnings from the passengers carried during the year fell from £720,000 to £551,000, or a decrease of £168,000 in passenger traffic

earnings. Regarding the goods traffic, this fell from 3,530,000 tons to 3,153,000 tons, or a drop of 376,000 tons in the year. That is all evidence of the fact that the railways find it more difficult, as the years proceed, to make ends meet, particularly so long as we continue to permit the road competition, some of it very unfair, against our railway system. I wish to refer briefly to some of the matters mentioned in the annual report of the Commissioner of Railways. I take it hon. members have read the report, because, as I have already explained, the operations of the railway system represent such a factor in the general financial position of the State. In the circumstances, members should acquaint themselves with the true position. At the moment, due in a measure to the fact that we have introduced economies, and have had the benefit of reductions both by means of the fall in the basic wage and under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Act, there is a demand, seeing that a reduction in the expenditure has been occasioned under the headings I have mentioned, for decreases in the freight rates chargeable to our customers. When it is borne in mind that the railway system is not meeting its financial obligations, I am afraid it will not be quite fair to the general community, until such time as we more nearly approach the stage of the revenue meeting the expenditure, to grant further reductions to the users of our railway system, thereby automatically transferring the additional charge to the general public. I am sure that the Government, Parliament, the Commissioner and I, as Minister, would be only too pleased to reduce the freight charges to the lowest possible minimum. In actual practice, we have done that regarding some of the goods we carry on the railways, particularly respecting goods considered necessary for the development of our natural industries. For instance, we carry fertilisers at a rate that could never be payable. However, those low rates are now regarded as so fixed that to suggest an increase in those charges would receive the strongest opposition, not only from those who benefit directly, but from the community as a whole. The public generally would be disinclined to ask the primary producers to carry any additional burdens. If the primary producer is entitled to submit to Parliament

that he should receive this consideration, then, in turn, he should extend some consideration to the railway system when he has produce that can be despatched by that means.

Mr. Marshall: You would be astonished at the quantity of wool motored along Ascot-road after dark. I do not know why it is done after dark, but it is a matter that should be looked into.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are aware of the position, but the fact remains that wool is benignly carted in accordance with the law of the land.

Mr. Marshall: That may be so; I do not say it is not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is well known that the Government have prosecuted a number of people where we thought the carriage of products was contrary to the law of the land. In the main, however, the law permits it to be done. We have really encouraged the transport of wool and other products by road, and we have encouraged the use of those roads for purposes other than what was originally intended. I do not think it was ever contemplated that road transport would be used to the detriment of one of the State's utilities to such an extent as to cause great losses, while, at the same time, the system was required to carry much that was necessary for the development of industry, at very low freights.

Mr. Doney: Have you comparative figures to show the quantity of wool carried last year by road and by rail?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, I have not those figures, but we are aware that large quantities of wool have been conveyed by road. I know that the argument is advanced that the way to overcome the difficulty is to reduce freight on wool. I suggest to those who argue that way that they should consider the loss of revenue involved in giving effect to such a proposal. If they are prepared to argue along that line, they should be prepared in turn to admit that unpayable freights now levied on essential lines, should carry an additional charge to make up the deficiency. I am afraid I can say definitely that no representative of the primary producers would agree to increasing the freight on essentials such as fertilisers.

Mr. Sleeman: Have they not done something along those lines in Queensland?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In Queensland a special freight has been imposed against the customer who partly uses the railways and partly the road. I know there are quite a number of people who consider that is an unfair method to adopt. It is considered that we should permit people to use conveniences available to them at the least possible cost to themselves. By that means industry itself would benefit, but it should not be done at the expense of the State itself. For the last quarter of a century I have heard it argued that by doing certain things, we would reap an ultimate advantage. But over that period I have not been able to see where the ultimate advantage has been reaped by the State, because as soon as the benefit is manifest in one direction, we have claims against us in another direction. In those circumstances the burden still remains unfair. I said it was considered that the Queensland method in some respect is unfair, and I am rather inclined to agree. In Victoria something of the sort has been introduced as a penalty rate against the individual who partly uses the railways and partly the road, in order to gain an advantage for himself to the disregard of the interests of the State. That position can hardly be reached in Western Australia, because at the moment I am controlling another department where such a condition is actually imposed. I refer to the mining industry. In Kalgoorlie, the Water Supply Department imposes a special penalty rate in the event of the mines using other than 100 per cent. scheme water. Thus if the mines use water in competition with the scheme, the penalty is heavy. If they use mine water for other than sluicing purposes, they have to pay more than the customary rate imposed by the department. We recognise the principle of imposing a penalty in such circumstances, seeing that the advantage of the State service might be recognised when desired, and its interests set aside when it suited, if that course were not adopted.

Mr. Doney: But it is a bad principle all the same.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I hope to hear the hon. member raise that contention when the Mines Estimates are

dealt with. I am afraid he will be absent. That is when he will have an opportunity to express his opposition to the principle. My personal view is that someone must lose, as the State is really the people as a whole, if we impose a condition that requires an individual to employ methods other than those easiest and cheapest to him, it is really absurd to go to the extent of forcing that individual to send his commodity over long distances by certain means when right at hand there is a commodity that will do as well. I agree with the member for Williams-Narrogin that the principle is bad, but, on the other hand, we cannot get away from the fact that we have upwards of £26,500,000 of the people's money tied up in the railway system, and either that system must provide interest, or the people themselves must find it by means of additional taxation.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The same applies to the tramways and the electricity department.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Unless those activities earn the interest and pay operating costs, then the deficiency must be made up by way of additional taxation against the people who do not use the system. Therefore, while it is practicable the State ought to protect its assets by imposing such conditions on those who take advantage of the road only for certain purposes—we ought to call upon them to carry a fair percentage of the burden of the railways.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do you know what quantity of wool went over the road last year?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I suppose about 10 per cent. was carried by road, but I am afraid it is becoming an increasing quantity, notwithstanding the fact that we impose an additional charge against the road users of last year. The position of the railways is entirely different from that of the road users in this respect, that the capital cost against the railways cannot be removed. It belongs to the State, and the community has to meet the interest bill. But the man using a truck may use it while it is in good running order to compete successfully with the railways, and when he can no longer compete because of the impaired condition of his truck, all he



has to do is to get rid of the truck by letting the vendor repossess it.

Mr. H. W. Mann: But in the meantime your trucks are running empty.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will come to that. While the individual can shelve his responsibility, or even turn to the insolvency court, the State cannot. We have to face the position. We have provided the railway system in order to foster industry, and it is only right and fair that we should call upon those who have secured the benefit of this capital expenditure, backed by the whole of the community, to make use of the facility so long as it is reasonable; and it is reasonable, as compared with the road traffic. People are always picking the eyes out of the railway system. At Lake Grace show one of our best known producers in the Lakes district told me that a certain teamster running motor trucks from that district to the city had asked him whether he would allow the teamster to handle his wool. The teamster quoted him a price which showed a fairly decent profit as against paying the railway freight. However, the producer said, "I will give you all my wool to cart by road if you will bring back all my super. by road for the same charge as the railways make." The teamster asked for 24 hours in which to consider the proposition and at the end of the time he said he could not accept it. "Very well," said the producer, "you cannot get my wool." All producers should adopt the same attitude. If they want their super. carried by the railways at a losing rate, they should allow the railways to carry also their products. I know it is claimed, and perhaps justifiably claimed, that in recent months, owing to the very heavy drop in price of wool, it has not been possible for the grower to pay the freight the railways were charging when wool was bringing a very big price. That may be true, but it should be remembered that when there comes again a general rise in prices, and prosperity ensues, there is bound to be a lag in the railways as against the producers. That has happened in regard to all other operations. When we turn the corner and wheat prices and wool prices rise in the market and the position of the individual producer becomes prosperous, the State will still lag behind and will not be able to enjoy the prosperity of individuals. For instance, there will be a period when income tax will be paid on the

previous year's income, which was very low. To-day, of course, the reverse obtains for the moment, but, as I say, the State will be lagging behind when prosperity comes again. So too, in regard to wool, although to-day the woolgrower finds difficulty in paying the railway freights—which, for obvious reasons, cannot be reduced—the time will inevitably come when the woolgrower will be prosperous, and still the railways will be lagging behind. The member for Perth by interjection referred to the running of empty trucks. I happen to be living on the railway line, and frequently when seeing empty trucks running both ways I wonder why it should be necessary to pull empty trucks up the hill at Mt. Lawley while other empty trucks are running down the hill. But I have never been able to think of a system by which we could have empty trucks just where we wanted them. In the same way, when I happen to be hurrying in to the city from Mt. Lawley and see other people hurrying from Perth out to Mt. Lawley, I think how fine it would be if we could arrange to transpose our positions without the fag of travelling.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It is not an analogous case. I say that wool is being brought by road from Wiluna while your trucks are coming down empty. You can meet that competition by a reduction in freight.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not so far, as a matter of fact, our trucks in the main are carrying goods from the interior to the port, while unfortunately a large percentage of them have to run out into the interior empty. The member for East Perth knows that the great proportion of empty trucks are hauled from the coast into the interior, the chief movement of trade on the railway system being from the interior to the coast. So it is not practicable to provide a cheap rate against the traffic, and that is what would have to happen to reduce the haulage of empty trucks. We have tried it in the matter of fertiliser carriage by providing that a low freight should prevail during a given season of the year so as to compel the wheatgrower to have his fertiliser carried when we are sending out trucks for his wheat. But whether it be wool freight or other freights, it is not possible to have empty trucks just where they are required without the cost of hauling them to that place. Take our stock trains: In the main our stock are hauled great distances on the railway system. But we can-

not take a stock truck loaded with cattle from Perth to Meekatharra and bring it back loaded with cattle. That is an evidence of the sort of thing that happens in a system such as ours, where we have long hauls in one direction only. We cannot operate a railway system in Western Australia as profitably as it can be done in a State like Victoria, for we have not the same possibility of earning. Unfortunately, we have long hauls of unloaded trucks in one direction for the purpose of bringing back traffic. A somewhat similar thing applies in regard to passengers. At a time like this in particular, there is a continuous clamour for the free carriage of passengers or goods on the railway system. Invariably the urge behind the claim is, "I do not ask you to run a special train; I will go on the ordinary train, and so it will not cost you anything to carry me." But that, in its logical conclusion, means that nobody need pay. In regard to goods for which free carriage is asked on the railways we are told, "You will be running the goods train, so why cannot you carry those goods for us?" But of course it is not possible, for somebody has to pay. So we find that in a business where a man is carrying on a strictly cash trade he can undersell another man who is carrying on a credit business. It is because those customers who do pay the man carrying on the credit business have to pay for those who do not pay. Yet repeatedly do I hear the argument, "Fill up your carriages by carrying people cheaply, or even for nothing at all." Of course that cannot be done. More than once was the Leader of the Opposition when Treasurer assured that if he spent certain money there and then, ultimately the Treasury would benefit. It reminds me that once I was accused by the late Mr. Frank Wilson in this Chamber of introducing a policy which meant that in three years the whole of our land would be nationalised. I asked him had he read that plank in our platform. He said he had, and he proceeded to read out the plank, "Non-alienation of Crown lands with a view to their ultimate nationalisation." I then asked him what "ultimate" meant, and he said it meant within the next three years. But I was able to tell him that Webster's dictionary held that it meant the most remote date that one could visualise. I think that is what happens when the Treasurer is assured that present expendi-

ture means ultimate benefit to the Treasury. Again, we have road competition with our tramways, many people preferring buses or taxis. But the trams were constructed at the expense of the general community with the general revenues of the State. They were provided at the request of the people who obtained the benefit. I say that when something else comes along to-morrow, those individuals who obtained that advantage have no right to transfer their patronage, casting their obligations on the rest of the community. The new Transport Act of New South Wales would astonish members in this Chamber. There it is provided that the transport board may impose on buses the ordinary license fee and in addition a penny per passenger per mile of the distance travelled by the bus. It is impossible for any bus profitably to carry on under that imposition.

Mr. North: That is along tramway routes.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, it is everywhere and anywhere. Again, the Act deals with competition against the railway system. A person licensed to carry goods in any part of the State served by a railway has to pay the ordinary license fee plus 3d. per ton per mile, including the weight of the vehicle and the total weight of the goods the truck can carry, whether it is carrying them or not. Thus, if it be a 3-ton truck with a net weight of 30 cwt. it would be charged on the basis of 4½ tons. That is an imposition and is not possible. It would unquestionably kill competition of any kind against the railway system. I do not suggest it is necessary for us to go to that extent. Buses properly controlled and legitimately operated are of benefit to the community, but I am not going to say that it is fair for a section of the community to demand something from the whole of the community and then, when it suits them, to throw that something overboard and transfer the obligation to the whole of the community.

Hon. P. Collier: Your remarks about the bus service cannot refer to Nedlands.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Nedlands only came into existence by reason of the fact that Parliament, in its wisdom, granted a concession to the people who opened up that land to put a tramway into the district.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not mean as served by the original tramway.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
The only Nedlands known until the tram was constructed to Claremont was along the tram route. It was only after an extension to Claremont was demanded and obtained that the balance of the territory was filled up. No portion of the metropolitan area that I know of has been developed except by extension of the tramway system. Buses have not done anything in developing the districts.

Hon. H. W. Mann: You do not suggest that the trams assisted the development of Nedlands?

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
I do not suggest it; I assert it definitely. The development of Nedlands resulted from our giving the company the right to construct a tramway. That was the only way in which the district was developed.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you think it is fair that a resident of Broadway, Nedlands, should have to spend 45 minutes to travel into town?

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
There are speedier methods.

Hon. P. Collier: Forty-five minutes!

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
That is not the point. When trams were demanded for Nedlands, those concerned were satisfied that the trams would suit their convenience. They obtained the capital to build them, backed by the people of the State.

Hon. P. Collier: That was 20 years ago.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
Nothing like 20 years ago.

Hon. P. Collier: I am referring to the first tramway.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
I think the first tramway to Nedlands dates back more than 20 years. But the capital cost still remains and has to be borne by someone. Until we arrive at the position reached in New South Wales and place a toll on competitors with public utilities, we shall not get rid of unfair competition.

Hon. P. Collier: But there is reason in everything. Your strictures in regard to Nedlands are absolutely unreasonable.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
I should like the hon. member to show in what way they are unreasonable. I do not think the position in Nedlands differs from that in most other districts.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, it does, because the tramway service out there is worse.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
We have improved it; it is much better than it was.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not know what it must have been before!

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
There is not a great deal of difference between Nedlands and the Inglewood district.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course there is. We have a good service to Inglewood.

Mr. H. W. Mann interjected.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS :**  
From Broadway to Perth is almost a direct route along the river and there are fewer stopping places. No one ever suggests running buses to Inglewood. Buses have never been allowed to run there, and there has never been a demand for them. The people of Inglewood are perfectly satisfied with the trams. I am afraid we are reaching a stage when, as soon as some little improvement comes along, no matter what the effect on the finances of the State as a whole may be, some people think we must throw overboard existing facilities and accept the new idea for the benefit of the few to the cost of the many. That is not desirable. I have mentioned what is being done in New South Wales. I do not suggest that we should follow that example. The authorities there are going to the other extreme and running the risk of causing a revulsion of feeling. With our tramway operations, I consider that the interest on the capital should be borne by the people who benefit from the service, and not by any other section of the system or by the general community. The loss on the tramways last year is a charge against general revenue, which means that the people residing in the North-West, in the remote parts of the agricultural districts and on the goldfields have to contribute, by way of taxation or increased charges for services rendered, to make good the loss on what might be termed a parochial utility. The people obtaining the benefit should bear the burden. The time is long past when we should transfer such parochial utilities as tramways to a board, in order that they might be responsible for any loss and distribute any profit amongst the people who obtain the benefit. The electricity supply turnover in the last 12 months showed a slight decrease, but

that was only to be expected in view of the fact that industry was seriously disturbed. People who used current when times were prosperous have had to reduce the quantity used in industry as well as in the home, and this has meant a falling off in revenue. Nevertheless, the station showed a profit last year. The station is doing wonderful service in assisting industry within its ambit, and I think that when prosperous times return, a serious complaint will arise from our inability to supply current to industries and people requiring it.

Mr. Kenneally: Start now to provide for it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We cannot finance it. To instal an additional unit at the power house would cost nearly £400,000, and we cannot possibly find the money. I know what will happen in future, and I tell members now that when prosperous times return and industries are springing up, complaint will be made that we were neglectful in not providing for the future. If we started to-day to make the necessary provision, it would take four years. Even at present we are in difficulty regarding applications for current. An application was recently made for current to be supplied at a certain centre to permit of the manufacture of goods that had previously been imported. It imposed a considerable strain to provide the necessary funds to make the necessary extension. It was said, "Why not go somewhere else where the power is installed and where extra capital expenditure would not be required." But the people concerned had reasons for demanding current at a certain place. We should be in a position to encourage industry to the end that we might avoid the importation of commodities that can be produced here. We agreed to make the extension. One thing further I should like to mention regarding the electricity supply. There has been a good deal of complaint, probably justified, against the minimum charge imposed on customers who obtain current direct from the Government. Most Government current, of course, is distributed by local governing bodies, but in certain districts we retail the current direct to consumers. Our minimum charge was 15s. per quarter, which has been operating ever since we started supplying but there have been complaints about the minimum because some of the local governing bodies have fixed their

minimum as low as 7s., the rate charged by the City Council. The Fremantle Tramways and the Claremont Council have a minimum of 9s. and another council have a minimum of 7s. 6d. We have agreed to reduce our minimum from 15s. to 10s. I do not think anyone will complain of that. A charge of 15s. a quarter means 1s. 3d. a week, while a charge of 10s. means about 9½d. a week. If people do not use that quantity of current, there is no warrant for connecting them up with the supply. In many instances people are cutting out electricity because they are not able to afford it, but they are hopeful of being able to use it in their homes again when times improve. To encourage them to use it and help them over difficult times, we have agreed to reduce the minimum to 10s.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [8.10]: I have nothing in the way of serious criticism to offer regarding the administration of the department. I am pleased that the Minister has framed reasonable Estimates. Even the merest tyro could have told him last year that his Estimates could not possibly be realised. The actual revenue turned out to be about £800,000 short of the estimated receipts. I thought the Minister would have given some indication of the Government's policy regarding interest. It is estimated that the interest for the railways will increase this year. I suppose that at some period the Government will make an adjustment of interest chargeable to the railways and to other undertakings. During the last seven or eight years the railways have spent £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 of capital, and a considerable proportion of that money has been raised in Australia. Interest has been debited at the rate at which the money was borrowed, but now that interest has been reduced by 1 per cent., 1½ per cent., and 1¾ per cent., I am wondering when the Treasurer is going to make an adjustment so that each utility will derive the benefit of the interest reduction consequent upon the loan conversion.

The Minister for Railways: It will be adjusted for each undertaking.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK: That does not appear in the Estimates.

The Minister for Railways: The Estimates were framed before it was known.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK: The absence of that adjustment does not enable us to form a proper estimate of the results of revenue

and expenditure. Undoubtedly on £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 of capital expended by the railways in the last seven or eight years the interest has been reduced. One per cent. on £1,000,000 means £10,000, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on £3,000,000 would mean nearly £50,000 less interest for the railways to pay.

The Minister for Railways: The interest is always averaged.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: But interest on the capital expended on the railways in the last seven or eight years—the capital raised in Australia—has been debited at the rate at which the money was raised. Notwithstanding that some of the money invested in the railways was raised at 3 per cent. the interest charged to the railways is much higher than the average.

The Minister for Railways: The whole is averaged by the Treasurer pro rata.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes. Say the average interest is 4.3 per cent., the interest debited to the Railway Department is about that percentage, notwithstanding that two-thirds of it was raised in the early days of railway construction when money cost 3 per cent. or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

The Minister for Railways: Some money may have been raised at 6 per cent., but the railways are not charged 6 per cent. interest on it.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The particular undertaking on which the 6 per cent. money was spent is charged interest at that rate, and that is averaged with the portion of the undertaking constructed with 3 per cent. money.

The Minister for Railways: It is averaged over the lot.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: But more interest is being charged to the Railway Department than the Government are paying since the interest rates on money raised in Australia were reduced. If that is so, the excess interest with which the Railway Department are being debited should be taken off the department to some extent to offset the disability under which the system is suffering. The employees are being reduced, and repairs and renovations and maintenance of all kinds are being neglected or put off. Nothing whatever is done that can be avoided. Yet we have an amount which, according to these Estimates, will be debited to the Railway Department in excess of what the State pays for interest. The serious aspect of the railway service,

I gather from the Commissioner's report, is maintenance. Throughout the report, no matter what branch one looks into, one finds that maintenance is being shelved or reduced. That cannot go on for ever. It can last for three months, or six or 12; but if it continues indefinitely, it will mean that the railway system of Western Australia, instead of being one of the safest in the Commonwealth, will reach the danger point. That is an aspect for which the Commissioner himself is not responsible, an aspect representing Government policy, an aspect in which the Government should take a hand. The Treasurer, I understand, practically says to the Commissioner of Railways, "We cannot borrow any money to make up deficits. All you can spend is what you can get from your customers." That means that if the Commissioner is not receiving the same amount of money as before from the users of the railways, he necessarily must neglect maintenance, unless he can obtain funds from some other source. The Government, desiring to maintain the asset which has been created, should not allow that position to obtain longer than necessary. The Commissioner cannot spare money from the running of trains, but he can spare it from repair or maintenance work. The ordinary maintenance of ways and works, we find, is 25 per cent. less. There has been no extra maintenance, for this is charged to a special vote. While ordinary maintenance has been reduced by 25 per cent., train mileage has been reduced by only about 6 per cent. It cannot be maintained that in the past too much money has been spent on maintenance. Therefore the inference is that we shall get down below the point of safety if the present position is allowed to exist too long. The Government eventually may find themselves saying, "We are sorry a dozen people have lost their lives, but we had not the money for adequate maintenance of the railways." They may find themselves using the same excuse to account for great delays in transport. For the past 15 or 20 years the railway system has not shown a profit of any considerable size, and the Commissioner has naturally been desirous of keeping down costs as low as possible. Certainly there never has been a profit permitting the Commissioner to expend considerable amounts of money in bringing the system up to a

state of efficiency beyond that warranted by the traffic. Therefore, when the amount of money spent on maintenance is reduced to so serious an extent as 25 per cent., although the reduction in train mileage amounts to only six per cent., it means that maintenance is being starved. Earnings have been reduced by 15 per cent., and the employees have to bear a big burden of reduction—20 per cent. Meantime, only about six per cent. less work is being done. Earnings have gone down because so large a proportion of the traffic is low-charge. I think the Commissioner once stated that 80 per cent. of the traffic carried during three or four months of the year was traffic which did not pay the average cost of transport. The employees, by retrenchment and reduction, are bearing their share of the burden; and the rest has been taken out of the system by reduced maintenance. Nearly 60 per cent. of the boilers, an important aspect of railway administration, are in a good state of repair, whereas even last year that description applied to 70 per cent. Maintenance all through is much less satisfactory than it has been for many years. Ever so many less crown stays were put in the boilers last year than during the previous year. It is not unknown that crown stays have burnt through and that boilers have burst on that account. If that kind of thing goes on too long, there is a possibility of serious consequences. I notice that the Commissioner in his report says he is laying five per cent. of the engines aside altogether. Naturally he would lay aside those in a bad state of repair, and thus relieve the expenditure on maintenance. Of the trucks, he states, 10 per cent. are being laid aside. So far as I see, it has taken us the whole of the 12 months to shift our last season's wheat; indeed, we have not finished it yet. Even though it is expected that the coming harvest will be much less than last year's, I do not think we can afford to lay aside 10 per cent. of the rolling-stock and shift the wheat to the seaboard within reasonable time. If wheat opens up at a satisfactory price, and then goes down again as in the past two or three years, whilst we have only a quarter of our wheat at the ports for despatch when the price is reasonably high, we may have to sell the remainder of our production at a price perhaps 1s. or 1s. 6d. less than can

be secured for it at present. In these times, when such wide fluctuations occur in market prices, we should be in a position to bring our wheat to the ports while the price is reasonably high. Can this be done if 10 per cent. of our rolling-stock and five per cent. of our engines are laid aside?

Mr. Marshall: Shall we have the ships, though?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think there has been a ship held up for two hours.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The whole of the freight has not been engaged yet.

The Minister for Railways: That applies everywhere.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The laying aside of trucks and locomotives means that we shall have less wheat at the ports during the first six months.

Mr. Angelo: On the other hand, the delay might result in bringing better prices.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: That is all right if we have the wheat at the ports. But if we have not got it at the ports, we shall have to take the price at the time of shipment; and thus the State may be involved in a loss of two or three million pounds. Such has been our actual experience during the past two years. If we delay the shifting of our wheat to the ports during the time the price is high, and if the price goes down this year as it has done in the past two years, we shall be shipping wheat and selling it on consignment when the price is much less than the product could be sold at straight away. I do not believe in rushing a great deal of wheat to the various ports just to have it there; but I do believe that when a decent price is offering we should be in a position, by having the wheat at the ports, to take advantage of the price.

Mr. Angelo: Nobody knows what is a decent price.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: But everybody knows that during the past two years wheat has opened at a much better price than has ruled during the later months.

The Minister for Lands: Surely that was not so last year.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes. Moreover, a few weeks ago wheat was at the lowest price recorded in history.

The Minister for Lands: It improved somewhat.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Nine weeks ago wheat was at a lower price than ever before, 1s. 8d. per bushel.

The Minister for Lands: It has been about 1s. 8d. right through.

Hon. P. Collier: During the previous year the price fell as the season advanced.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: In January of 1930 wheat was 4s. 10½d. per bushel, and some of my farmer friends said they would wait until it was 5s. Eventually they sold at 1s. 8d. If that set of conditions arises this year owing to the rolling-stock factor, a grievous harm will be done to Western Australia. We ought to shift the wheat from the country as quickly as we can with the facilities available. I do not say there should be an immense capital expenditure on rolling stock.

Mr. Doney: Production will be considerably decreased this year.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: That does not affect the position that this State has spent enormous sums on railway equipment.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner assures me that he will be able to handle the coming harvest as expeditiously as the last.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The coming harvest might be worth 2s. per bushel less at the end of the season than at the commencement, and we would have still a considerable amount at the reduced price, because it was not at the port for shipment. I put that aspect before the Minister and ask him to take it into consideration.

The Minister for Railways: If I could get the money from the Treasurer—

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It is not a matter that requires much money.

The Minister for Lands: It is a question of getting money into the Treasury first.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It would require a small amount of money only to put the rolling stock into proper condition. At present we find 1,200 trucks are put out of commission altogether.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: That is what the Commissioner says.

The Minister for Railways: No, they have been put into sidings because it was not economical to keep them running on the road.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: If I know anything about railway working, the Commissioner selected all the trucks that were in a

state of bad repair and placed them in the sidings. He will not be able to put those trucks into repair in a few weeks. If rush traffic necessitated additional trucks being used, those trucks would not be in a state of repair at all.

The Minister for Railways: But the "bad state of repair" does not really amount to a bad condition at all.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I should say that 10 or 15 per cent. of the rolling stock is always in a state of bad repair. Those are the trucks that have been put aside by the Commissioner. Then again, the trucks that are actually in use become damaged and dis-repaired.

The Minister for Railways: But you can say definitely that you can see 12 months' traffic ahead of you.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: With fewer facilities available than we have had in the past?

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner discussed this matter with me because he knew it would be referred to in this Chamber. He said he could handle the coming harvest as expeditiously as he did last year.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Will he be able to handle the harvest at the same rate per week?

The Minister for Railways: That will not be necessary as the harvest will not be so great.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is not the point.

The Minister for Railways: Did you have any trouble with marketing last year?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No. Overseas selling was slow last year.

The Minister for Railways: You are an interested party.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I am interested in wheat.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) is always interested in the marketing of wheat.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I agree with you absolutely on this point.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Then I will not endeavour to convince the hon. member. If the Minister will only consider the position from the economic standpoint, he must realise that it may mean a difference of £1,000,000 or £2,000,000 coming to Western Australia.

The Minister for Railways: Not that.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: That is what it meant to us a couple of years ago. If we had been in a position to sell our wheat in January of 1930 when the price was 4s. 10d. a bushel, instead of having to wait until it was 1s. 10d. a bushel, look at the tremendous advantage to the State from an economic point of view.

The Minister for Railways: It was a question of marketing. You could not get the wheat away by boat.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I want the wheat to be at the port of shipment as quickly as possible so that if the price is favourable, we can sell then rather than wait until the price drops. Anyhow I have carried out my duty in bringing this matter before Parliament, and if the Minister is not in agreement with me, that is not my fault.

The Minister for Railways: I want to get the wheat down in good order, and if we cannot, well—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is getting near the danger-line now.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I want to impress upon the Minister that he should not allow the rolling stock to get into a state of repair that is below standard. Everything must be done to keep the rolling stock in decent repair so as to handle the traffic expeditiously.

The Minister for Railways: And we can do so.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: If the Minister says that the Commissioner claims he can do with 10 per cent. less rolling stock what he did with 10 per cent. extra rolling stock last year, then it is wonderful.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner, in a note to me, says that the prospects of a good harvest are bright and that with the facilities available it is anticipated that no difficulty will be experienced in conveying the wheat expeditiously to the sea-ports.

Mr. Griffiths: But you will have considerably less wheat to carry than last year.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The matter is of sufficient importance to be discussed and all the facts ascertained. Later on, if it is found in June or July that 10,000,000 bushels of wheat are still in the country and cannot be conveyed to the port, with the result that sales cannot be effected at advan-

tageous prices, it will be useless to blame the Opposition.

The Minister for Railways: Exactly the same criticism was levelled last session when it was said that the Commissioner could not handle the harvest, and he did handle it.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: This year it is different. The Commissioner has deliberately laid aside portion of the rolling stock.

The Minister for Railways: And he has deliberately made the statement I referred to.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Then I hope the Commissioner is right. He generally is right when he makes a statement.

Mr. Angelo: But surely 10 per cent. less rolling stock to deal with a shortage of 30 per cent. in the harvest is quite safe.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The hon. member is not growing wheat. If he were, he would think differently.

Mr. Marshall: He is only growing fat, so far as I can see.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The Minister did not give us much encouragement regarding any reduction of freights, although costs have come down and maintenance has been decreased.

The Minister for Railways: There is a lot of leeway to make up.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: We might make it up better if we were to bring freight down appreciably. I remember telling the Committee on numerous occasions that unless people used the railways and were prepared to use the system for the carriage of high-class freights, there would have to be a re-adjustment in regard to the lower rates at which other goods were carried. I do not know that the time has not arrived when the lower freight rates will have to be raised. Last year we reached a stage at which 80 per cent. of the railway traffic was carried at considerably under cost to the department in running the trains.

The Minister for Lands: A lot of that was due to the fact that the timber industry had fallen off.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I know that. Simply because the timber industry fell away, we could not refuse to run the railways for the benefit of the people in that part of the State. I am with the Minister regarding the position affecting wool and other commodities, and I am sure the time will arrive very soon when, unless we secure more of the traffic for which high freights are charged, we shall have to increase the



lower freight charges. It will not be desirable, but it will have to be done. We cannot starve maintenance for four or five years merely to carry fertilisers and other essential commodities at less than cost to the railways. The day of reckoning will arrive, and I hope it will not be too long delayed, particularly as the wages bill has fallen from 25 to 30 per cent. throughout the railway system. Bearing that in mind, we should at least be able to keep the rolling stock in a state of proper repair, because it costs considerably less to do so now than formerly. There is a 48-hour week for employees, and the basic wage has been reduced, on top of which there has been the further reduction under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Act. In these days it does not cost the State nearly so much to keep the system in repair as it did two or three years ago. The Commissioner has put it in black and white stating definitely and frankly that he is neglecting maintenance. So far as I am concerned, that means that Parliament will have to tell the Government that the sooner that policy is jettisoned and we revert to the policy of keeping maintenance at the safety line basis, the better.

The Minister for Railways: You are not justified in saying that. The Commissioner does not say that maintenance is below the safety line.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: We all know that, though something may be done for a week or a month, the time must arrive when repairs must be undertaken and the system brought up to standard.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister probably remembers that in 1911 he, as Premier, had to deal with what were referred to as "belated repairs."

The Minister for Railways: I do not think you should bring that up.

Hon. P. Collier: I think £100,000 was asked for to deal with belated repairs.

The Minister for Railways: History may repeat itself.

Hon. P. Collier: It will. And in a year or two another Government will have to undertake the responsibility.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Before Labour Governments assumed office in 1910 and in 1922, somewhat similar positions arose to those confronting us now. If history repeats itself, a Labour Government will come into power shortly and will have to face enormous expenditure on account of belated re-

pairs. Should that happen, then the Government will not be able to reduce freights because of the legacy left to them by their predecessors in office. I will leave it at that. The two points I have raised are of sufficient importance to deserve mature consideration by the Minister. The only other point I desire to touch on refers to the electricity supply agreement with the Perth City Council, which has been in existence for 15 or 16 years and has still many years to run. That agreement provided for the sale of electricity supplies at a price that has proved to be far below cost. If there was ever a time in the history of the State when, in justice to the community as a whole, readjustments should be made, it is the present. We have repudiated contracts in every direction. Under the law of the land we had a basic wage, but that law has been altered. We decided that it could be varied quarterly, and then under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Act we reduced the wage still further. We have made definite contracts with people in regard to interest, and that all over Australia, not merely in a little thing like this electricity supply. People who were owed £560,000,000 by Australia have had their contracts broken. Of course they were supposed to agree to it voluntarily, but all know that the big stick was waiting for anyone who disagreed. So we have broken a contract in regard to interest which has meant seven or eight millions being taken from the investors. But here we have a contract between the Government and the Perth City Council, together with the Fremantle Tramways Board, a contract which is giving the local authorities a distinct advantage in the price they pay for electricity.

Mr. Angelo: Are they making profits?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Of course they are. The Perth City Council made something like £60,000 out of it last year.

Mr. Angelo: Then that is a good argument for introducing a readjustment.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: The Government are selling them current at a price below cost. I represent people in the country, and I know that my constituents do not want to be saddled with this undertaking if, because of these contracts, it should show a loss some day. At present its head is only just above water. The people of Claremont and Cottesloe are paying 4d. a unit for their electricity because it is being sold at less than cost to the Fremantle Tramway Board.

On the other hand the people of Subiaco are paying 6d. per unit less 1d.

The Minister for Railways: That is because they are charged too much by the Perth City Council. That agreement is ultra vires.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Then, Mr. Chairman, you can tell your local authority that their agreement is ultra vires, and they can take counsel's advice and get a reduction. Certainly if they are being unduly mulcted in charges by the Perth City Council, the position ought to be rectified. But the position between the Government and the Perth City Council is that a definite contract is in existence. Surely this is the time when Parliament should say, "We are prepared, in view of all the circumstances, to allow the Perth City Council to have its electricity at cost price to the State." The city should be well satisfied with that. Of course we do not wish to make a profit out of them, because it must be remembered that they surrendered certain advantages, as, for instance, the proposal to generate their own current, but at least we should say that the cost to the community shall be the least cost to the city council.

Mr. Sampson: Well, we will say that.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Of course it will require a Bill, and it will not be of much use for a private member to introduce such a Bill. But if the Government will take this up and if, when the Minister for Railways is introducing the Bill, the Attorney General quotes the Financial Emergency Bill, the measure will be put through. It would not mean an injustice to the city council.

Hon. P. Collier: They will be making a smaller profit, the same as everybody else; that is all.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: They may have to forego some advantage which they did not expect, but actually they will be no worse off. The value of money has fluctuated greatly since the making of that agreement. Wages, which were then 8s. 6d. or 9s. a day, have risen to 15s. per day, while coal, which was then worth 4s. or 5s. per ton at the power station, has risen to 12s. per ton. Nobody could have foreseen that. Actually we cannot see very far ahead, for only six weeks ago wheat was 1s. 10d. per bushel and all authorities said there was no sign of its rising, whereas to-day it is 1s. a bushel better than it was at that date. Since labour costs and the price of coal play so important a

part in this electricity agreement, I do not think anybody could say we were doing any injustice if we declared that the production cost should be the cost of the electricity to the Perth City Council. What really happens is that we have to charge the people of Applecross and other places supplied direct by the Government a much higher rate for the current because the Government are losing £40,000 on what they sell to the city council. And the disparity will increase as the years go by, for the demand will assuredly increase, and the more that is used the greater will be the loss, unless, concurrently we increase the rate to our own consumers.

Mr. Angelo: Are you sure about that £40,000 loss each year?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes, it is in the Commissioner's report.

The Minister for Railways: It is about right.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: In 1931, out of 69,000,000 units generated, 40,000,000 were taken by the city council at a loss to the State, while the Fremantle tramways took 10,000,000 units. So we see the position that has arisen because of those two agreements, which nobody could foresee would pan out as they have. At this stage, when we are making all sorts of readjustments, the price of electricity is one of the things that could be readjusted to the advantage of the State. If the Minister will bring down a Bill providing that the Perth City Council and the Fremantle Tramway Board shall get current at a differential rate, we can put it through.

The Minister for Railways: Would it not be better to put it all under a trust?

Hon. P. Collier: You cannot do that this session, and the loss is going on all the time.

The Minister for Railways: I am sure we could not put the alternative into operation this session.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It would be well supported. All on the Government side would support it, and the Attorney General could be instructed to quote the Financial Emergency Act.

The Attorney General: I do not know that I can be instructed.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No, but the hon. member could be requested. Members on both sides would support it.

Hon. P. Collier: We could carry it by a big majority.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I hope the Government will take this into consideration at this stage. The previous Government could not do it, because the community were not then in the proper frame of mind.

Hon. P. Collier: We had not started repudiating.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No, but we are doing all sorts of things in the interests of the State to-day, and this is just another of those things. I hope the Minister will bring down the Bill this session and get the matter definitely fixed up.

**MR. KENNEALLY** (East Perth) [8.57]: Dealing with a huge concern like the Railway Department, one does not want to enter into petty criticism of its operations. When the railway revenue falls considerably one does not expect the overhead or administrative costs to be reduced in exactly the same ratio. Yet in recent times the employees of the Railways have been reduced 25 per cent. in number; the Commissioner's report shows that in a spread of over two years they have been reduced by 2,000. The member for Geraldton showed what has made that reduction possible. The amount spent on ways and works in 1931 was less by £224,061 than was spent in 1930. I do not want to be in a position to say "I told you so" when the inevitable happens, but there is no doubt what will be the result of this tremendous reduction in the maintenance of the permanent way. Since the staff was not previously overmanned, since we did not have men in excess of what was required to maintain the safety of passengers travelling by railway, there will certainly be an aftermath of this cut, cut, cut going on in the department to-day. Surely it is not contended that the number of employees in the service previously was 2,000 in excess of what safety demanded! If that is the contention of the Minister, there is something for the ex-Minister to answer.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The Commissioner never said that he had an excess of staff.

**Mr. KENNEALLY**: I do not think he would say it to-day. While it is necessary to conserve the available funds, the conservation of funds should cease before we run any risk with the people who utilise the railways. I am afraid we have gone beyond that

point. A reduction of staff by 2,000 would warrant our obtaining a report from the Commissioner as to why he employed so many men last year and why so many fewer this year.

The Minister for Railways: You could get it from the Minister.

**Mr. KENNEALLY**: The previous Minister was not in charge when the great number were employed. The big reduction has taken place during the last two years, and the question is whether the staffing of the railways has not fallen below safety point. This is not a party question. I have had something to do with the railways of the State, both in travelling over them and working on them, and I say that the condition of the permanent way was not in excess of requirements. The permanent way is being starved, and there will be an aftermath for the successors of the present Government. It has been said that this sort of thing recurs from time to time. Undoubtedly within a year or two there will be a tremendous demand for expenditure to restore the permanent way to safety point. This matter is the more serious in view of the fact that rolling stock is depreciating. On the Commissioner's admission, he has put 10 per cent. of the trucks into sidings. They may be seen in the sidings, derelicts, marked and set aside, apparently to indicate that they will not be wanted any more. I am assuming that they will be wanted in future, and that it will be the duty of the next Government to restore the rolling stock to a proper standard. Trucks and locomotives set aside in that way deteriorate more rapidly than if kept in ordinary working condition. It would be better to spread the expenditure over the whole of the rolling stock and keep it in working order ready for the traffic that will later be offering, rather than to cast aside a portion of it and let it deteriorate, and throw the responsibility on the succeeding Government to restore it. I think more attention should be given to catering for passenger traffic. There was an apt illustration of this recently. It will be within the knowledge of the Minister that a picnic was arranged at Byford to raise funds for the Harris hospital fund. Certain coaches were made available at £1 each, and one train crew gave their services free to assist the fund. The rush of the public to avail themselves of the cheap fares was so great that two

or three other train crews had to be requisitioned, and instead of 10 or 12 coaches being ample to cope with the traffic, 48 coaches were necessary. That shows how the public will respond if railway fares are brought within their reach. The fares on that occasion were within the reach of the public and the public responded. As the organisers of the fund made a substantial profit and paid for the coaches, and paid for all except one train crew, the Commissioner should consider adopting some such system to cater to a greater extent for the travelling public. If he does so, I am sure the public will respond in a manner that will make the railways pay again. The Minister and other members have referred to freight charges. Annually reference is made to charges for the carriage of superphosphate. I do not claim that the freight on super. should be increased to the farmers generally, but I repeat what I have previously maintained that there is no reason why a farmer who can sign his name to a cheque for £20,000, £30,000, or £40,000 should have service rendered him by the Railway Department at less than cost. A man who is starting on the land, or struggling on the land, should receive a freight concession on his super. because it helps him to become established. But that should not apply to established farmers. Why should a wealthy farmer call upon the Railway Department for service at less than cost? In other words, why should he receive a gift from the rest of the community simply because he happens to be in the particular calling that requires the use of super?

The Minister for Agriculture: Would you abolish the low freights on super?

Mr. KENNEALLY: No; I would continue the low freights to people who are starting on the land and to those struggling on the land, but those who can afford to pay should be made to pay the cost of the service. It would be infinitely better if the difference were used to assist the struggling men still further.

Mr. Griffiths: How would you do it?

The Attorney General: You mean that the freight charged to Brown would be greater than the freight charged to Smith because of his income?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Undoubtedly. If Brown is worth £30,000, the freight charged

to him should be sufficient to cover the cost of the service to him.

The Attorney General: And the same with passenger fares?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Attorney General should know that passenger fares are fixed on the basis that Brown, Smith or Jones pays sufficient to cover the cost. The super freight, however, is reduced to assist the people going on the land to establish themselves.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, to assist the Commissioner of Railways to get more wheat to carry.

Mr. KENNEALLY: That is a bogey; incidentally, it does achieve that, but the return traffic that the super. helps to produce is also carried at a reduced rate. It is carried at a profit of a point of a penny. It would take a fair number of points to compensate for the reduced charge on super. I believe we should assist people to establish themselves on the land; that is why I have never opposed the low freight charged on super., but once a man has become established on the land, there is no justification for giving him a service below its cost to the community. He should be charged what it costs. If the farmer who is established and wealthy is entitled to receive super. at a lower rate than the actual cost of transporting it, what argument can be advanced against other wealthy persons receiving service from the department at less than the actual cost? It is all very well for the Minister for Agriculture to say that the low freight on super. brings more wheat freight. It may do so, but every service rendered by the department at less than cost is reflected in the finances of the department, and then, when efforts are made to balance the department's finances, the first thing that receives attention is the wages of the men who render the service at less than cost. When members opposite were sitting on this side of the House, they frequently spoke of the wages of the workers, their long-service leave and the concessions they enjoyed, but we never heard them mention the services rendered to the farmers at less than cost.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, you did.

Mr. KENNEALLY: When efforts are made to square the finances of the railways, the first move made is against the wages of the workers. Wages have been sliced all

round. The argument was advanced in the Arbitration Court that district allowances should not be granted, and they were accordingly reduced. At the same time people well able to do without concession freights are receiving services at the hands of the very men whose wages and privileges have been reduced.

Hon. P. Collier: That is true.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There is another thing which tells against railway finance. The railways are wrongly regarded as a commercial concern. In a country that is in a state of development, they cannot be regarded as a commercial concern. They are an agency to assist in the development of the country. Members cannot have it both ways. If they are to be regarded as a commercial concern, the Commissioner should be given full authority to say, "I am going to run them from a commercial point of view. That line will not pay and I will close it; this other line is only partly paying and I will close that." That would be disastrous to the country. The railways must be regarded as a developmental agency for the opening up of the country. If they are to be regarded in that light we must be prepared either to lose on their operations or to make a grant to them from Consolidated Revenue, to make good the losses on services which are not fully paid for by the users. States in Australia better developed than ours and less in need of developmental lines, make what is termed developmental grants from Consolidated Revenue, thereby improving the finances of the railways. The Minister said that in certain cases we should not compare Western Australia with Victoria. I admit that. Victoria is more developed than we are. That being so, there is less necessity for that State to make developmental grants to the railway system. Notwithstanding that, these grants are made. The railways cannot be used simply from the commercial point of view. In Western Australia we make no such grants. We say, "There is the total cost of the railways to the community; the railways should be made to pay even if no allowance is made to them." We cannot have it both ways. If they are to be regarded as a commercial proposition, the Commissioner must have a free hand in running them, and must be able to deal with those services which are not paying.

That, however, would be disastrous. If we regard them in the other light, it is no use members opposite talking about the losses, and using them as an argument why certain things should be taken from the employees of the railways. There should shortly be a tremendous improvement in our railway system. It is employing 2,000 fewer men and the wages of those men are being saved. Yet the working expenses have gone up from 80.41 to 81.62 per cent. The wages of the employees have been reduced by Arbitration Court awards and by the emergency legislation. I admit that the full effects of these economies were not felt during the year covering the Commissioner's report, although some of the results must come within that term. For the year we are now passing through, the full results will be seen. Whilst there has been a great reduction in expenses, particularly wages, and whilst under the emergency legislation the wages have been reduced on the average 20 per cent., namely from 18 to 22½ per cent.—

The Attorney General: Not under the emergency measures.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Under the emergency legislation wages were reduced from 18 to 22½ per cent.

The Attorney General: The emergency legislation reduced them only about eight per cent.

Mr. KENNEALLY: No. That legislation reduced the wages as they existed in June, 1930, by 18 to 22½ per cent.

The Attorney General: The legislation only reduced them the difference between the 10 per cent. reduction that had already taken place and the ultimate reduction.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I said that.

The Attorney General: Your statement was not correct.

Mr. KENNEALLY: But the Attorney General has admitted that it is. Because of the emergency legislation the total reduction in the wages of the railway men meant that they received from 18 to 22½ per cent. less than they were getting in June, 1930.

The Attorney General: No.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is so.

The Attorney General: If you had said that on account of the emergency legislation and the basic wage reductions they

were getting that much less, you would have been correct.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am giving the total amount. The Arbitration Court made certain reductions, and then on account of the emergency legislation the total reduction came to 18 to 22½ per cent.

The Attorney General: The total reduction was not due to the emergency legislation. It was due to the two causes.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Certain reductions in wages were made by the court, and the reductions made by the emergency legislation brought the total to between 18 and 22½ per cent.

The Attorney General: Now you have made a correct statement.

Mr. Marshall: He has been saying that all along.

The Attorney General: Not at all.

Mr. Marshall: If the court had made no reduction, your emergency legislation would have reduced wages between 18 and 22½ per cent.

Mr. KENNEALLY: We have now supplied the Attorney General with the information and the intelligence that enables him to understand it.

The Attorney General: After almost disorderly interjections I have induced you to make a correct statement.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Despite these reductions when an application was made to the Commissioner, through the Minister, that these should be reflected in the house rents charged by the Commissioner for the housing of his employees, it was met with a flat refusal. At the Premiers' Conference the Attorney General said that there must be a slide down everywhere. That being so, it was reasonable that those who occupy the Commissioner's houses should apply for a reduction in the rentals charged. The reply from the Minister was that the houses these people were occupying were being charged for at a lower rate than other houses in the vicinity. The cases are not analogous. In the case of privately-owned houses, the tenants may be paying so much a week, but when all the rent for the whole year has been received it does not represent 52 weekly payments at the fixed weekly rental. In other words the owner of the house does not get anything like the amount represented by the weekly rent that he is charged. No agents' charges have to be taken into consid-

eration in the case of the houses occupied by tenants of the Commissioner. The Railway Department take no risk through non-payment of rent because the rent is stopped out of the employees' wages. They are, therefore, sure of their revenue. Seeing that the wages have been reduced in accordance with the Plan that reduction should be reflected in the rentals charged by the Commissioner. Instances have been given to the Minister showing clearly that the rent charged is not less than the rent charged by private owners. In many cases the rent returns twice as much as that charged by private owners. I repeat that statement.

The Minister for Railways: I heard you the first time.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I hope the Minister will now take some notice of it. The application for a reduction in the rentals was turned down.

The Minister for Railways: I do not really think the applicants expected a reduction.

Mr. KENNEALLY: They did not expect a reduction in wages.

The Minister for Railways: They are still below the rent charged for similar houses outside.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I can prove that in many cases this is not so. The conveniences do not compare with those of private houses. Furthermore, the returns from the outside houses are not nearly equal to what the rentals would indicate.

*[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]*

The Minister for Railways: The people are not compelled to live in those houses.

Mr. KENNEALLY: They are compelled to accept a reduction in wages.

The Minister for Railways: There are cheaper houses outside.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There are not enough of them.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think that is so.

Mr. KENNEALLY: They were compelled to accept a reduction in wages. The Government argued that there should be a general slide-down, but the slide-down stopped when it came to a question of rentals. The employee is told, "We will take it out of your wages, but we will give you no recognition as regards your rental." Rentals have come down materially during the last

year or two. If the Commissioner made the reduction requested, he would still be in a far better position than the average landlord of to-day. I hope the Minister will give the matter further consideration and grant at least a slight reduction in rent. The argument used regarding the developmental grant from Consolidated Revenue to the Railway Department applies to the matter of interest mentioned by the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock). If the Plan creates a position resulting in reduced interest rates, and if the reduction has not been applied to the interest on moneys spent on railway development, that reduction should take place straight away.

The Minister for Railways: It will apply at the date of the relief being obtained. The reduction in interest rates has taken place since the date of that report.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Assume that two or three millions have been raised in Australia and spent on the development of the railway system. Will the system not get the benefit of the reduction in interest consequent on the conversion loan?

The Minister for Railways: I do not say that at all. Whatever the proportion the two millions bear to the whole of our loan expenditure, so will the amount be credited to the Railway Department.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Loan expenditure, whether from overseas or locally?

The Minister for Railways: Yes. The average rate of interest is worked out by the Treasury and charged accordingly.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Then the Railway Department do not get the benefit of the reduction in interest on money borrowed in Australia. They should get that benefit.

The Minister for Railways: So they will.

Mr. KENNEALLY: But the Minister says, on the average of the total amount of loan expenditure, overseas as well as Australian. The railway system, therefore, will not get the benefit of the whole of the reduction consequent on the conversion loan. An idea is gaining ground that any old stick will do to beat the Railway Department with. The railway service is always there to carry any baby. Members opposite in the past have argued that because the financial results of the Railway Department are not satisfactory from their point of view railway wages should be reduced. I urge that charges be allotted to the proper departments. As regards the safety margin of the railway sys-

tem, has the Minister travelled recently on the Kensington-street tram?

The Minister for Railways: Whenever I have been down there I have been in a hurry, and therefore have walked.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I have spoken to the Minister repeatedly regarding that tramline. Over 12 months ago a gang was to have been put on to re-lay the line.

The Minister for Railways: I would never re-lay that track.

Mr. KENNEALLY: But the Minister promised to do it.

The Minister for Railways: I may have threatened. I did not promise.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I took it as a promise. The gang to do the work was actually named, but the Minister learnt that the Treasurer could not find the money. The tramline is a hurdle track and not a tramway track. It is a danger to the community. Later it may be argued that the returns show that the line is not paying well.

The Minister for Railways: What about a trackless bus?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am prepared to consider any improved transportation facilities. I feel much concerned as to the electricity supply. If the optimistic views of various people, including myself, are well-founded, we have turned or are about to turn the financial corner. We are not, however, prepared to meet an increased demand from factories for electric current. An amount was placed on previous Estimates for extension of the power house, but that proposal was dropped. The electricity supply could not now cope with an increased industrial demand. Representatives of the Labour Party, with the full assistance of the Minister for Railways and the Chamber of Commerce, are using their utmost efforts to promote and extend local industries; but all their efforts will be vain if additional current cannot be supplied when needed. The matter is one that urgently needs the Government's attention. One of the tragedies of the present day consists in the number of young lads unable to obtain employment. We ought to see that when we are called upon to supply extra goods and services, we have the necessary electric power available. Expenditure already incurred in preparation for additions to the power house represents waste at present. Every endeavour should be made to increase the plant so as to enable it to cope with a greater demand.

I hope, too, that the Minister will look into the question of rolling stock for the Railway Department. I do not doubt the Commissioner's assurance that he will be able to handle the crop; but there will be a desire on the part of those holding wheat to get rid of it, and the railway system should be able to afford the necessary means of transport. That cannot be done unless the rolling stock is in order. Certainly it cannot be achieved by simply getting rid of 2,000 men and laying aside a considerable proportion of the rolling stock.

**MR. BROWN** (Pingelly) [9.43]: I realise that it is difficult for a member to criticise an essential public utility like the railway system, which is not paying. We ought to analyse the reasons why it does not pay. I agree with the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) that too much is expected from the Commissioner of Railways. I look upon the railway system as a utility for the development of this country. The State Shipping Service, for example, loses thousands of pounds annually, but is essential to the welfare of our people in the North. They must have either State ships or subsidised vessels. The State builds a railway into a new district which is just being settled. That railway cannot be expected to pay immediately; but when it is handed over by the Public Works Department to the Commissioner of Railways, he is supposed to make it pay interest, sinking fund, and all other expenses straight away. That is absolutely wrong. The more railways the State builds and hands over to the Commissioner, the more difficult will it be for him to make both ends meet. There are some anomalies in connection with our freight charges. I have already referred to the instance in which five tons of oats, sent over a distance of 55 miles, entailed an expenditure of between £2 or £3 for "local charges." I have not been able to find out what those charges represent. That sort of thing does not encourage people to patronise the railways, even those recently established to develop new areas. A man desired to send a bag of superphosphate from Bassendean to his home, a distance of 25 miles. When it reached his station, it had cost him 16s. 4d., whereas a motor truck would have delivered it to his own door for 13s. 6d. With such a difference, we cannot expect people to refrain from using motor transport. There is only one way of getting over this difficulty,

and that is to reduce the minimum loading demanded by the Commissioner of Railways. At the present time, the minimum for a truck load is six tons. If a man desired to send a ton of wheat to a mill for gristing purposes, and asked the miller to take out the cost of gristing and freight expenses, he would get no flour in return. The Commissioner argues that the farmer can act in conjunction with others, and so provide a complete truck load of six tons. Farmers live miles apart, and often do not see each other for a month or more. It is not always convenient to work in conjunction with one's neighbours. I suggest that the minimum load be reduced. If it were reduced to a ton, it would make for additional traffic, and perhaps the trucks would not have to run empty. It is impossible for farmers to patronise the railways under existing conditions for gristing purposes, for instance, and therefore they make arrangements to send their wheat in by motor truck. Since he has been in office, the Minister for Works has granted many concessions, and the cost entailed in running trucks has been reduced by 50 per cent., if the trucks are used for going to railway stations.

The Minister for Railways: It would never pay to run under the conditions you suggest—one ton of produce in a 6-ton truck.

Mr. BROWN: It is the only way to overcome the difficulty. The trucks will run empty otherwise.

The Minister for Railways: You would not agree to put your produce at the siding and leave it there to be lifted at the Commissioner's convenience?

Mr. BROWN: I would not say that at all.

The Minister for Railways: That is the only way you can get over the empty truck difficulty.

Mr. BROWN: The whole trouble arises out of the minimum loading required. If the Minister desires to encourage the use of our railways, the minimum loading will have to be reduced. Our passenger fares compare favourably with those charged on other railways in Australia. When in Victoria recently, I found that the second-class fare for the distance I travel in this State was 2s. more than the fare in Western Australia. Thus we have nothing to complain about under that heading.



Mr. J. H. Smith: But you get better accommodation there.

Mr. BROWN: Our seats may be a little harder than theirs.

The Minister for Railways: You can always take a cushion with you.

Mr. BROWN: I do not carry cushions! Then I noticed that there are foot warmers provided in the railway carriages in the Eastern States.

The Minister for Railways: Only in the first-class compartments.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know anything about the second-class compartments. I know that I entered a railway carriage at Sydney and had to stand for a long time before I could get a seat.

The Minister for Railways: You will always find someone here to ask you to sit down.

Mr. BROWN: Regarding our freights here, wheat and chaff is carried at a profit.

Mr. Kenneally: Very small.

Mr. BROWN: The railways must make a profit on some lines. If they carried superphosphate at a profit, it would not encourage production. If they carry super at a loss, the railways will be recouped because of the greater production. In many instances superphosphate has meant that production has been 100 per cent. greater. If that is so, our railways will be recouped indirectly through decreasing freights. It is in the interests of the community as a whole to convey superphosphate as cheaply as possible.

Mr. Kenneally: You will put up a good argument for conveying superphosphate for nothing.

The Minister for Railways: Or for paying a bonus on such freight.

Mr. BROWN: Although we appreciate the fact that superphosphate is carried at a cheap rate, it has to be remembered that the trucks would probably be hauled empty because they have to go to where the wheat is stacked.

Mr. Kenneally: You know trucks have taken superphosphate to the sidings and have had to return empty.

Mr. BROWN: But not in many instances. It has occurred when superphosphate orders have not been given in time. Generally speaking, the farmer gives his order for super, and it is delivered during the wheat season.

The Minister for Railways: What are you going to do this season when the farmers hold up their wheat?

Mr. BROWN: No farmer will hold up his wheat this year. At the same time, it is possible that the railways will not have so much wheat to shift as last year.

The Minister for Railways: We are sure we will not have as much.

Mr. BROWN: I heard the Minister say that we had dispensed with the services of over 1,700 men on the railways, but that we must retain essential services. That seems peculiar to my mind. If the railways are able to handle the traffic as well as last year, it must indicate that the department has been overmanned.

The Minister for Railways: We are not doing the same business, but the facilities must be retained for use when required.

Mr. Hegney: You do not suggest that the men employed are doing the same work as the 1,700 who have gone?

Mr. BROWN: They are not working the same hours.

Mr. Patrick: The railways are not carrying the goods.

Mr. BROWN: Or perhaps the administration is a great deal better.

Mr. Hegney: The administration is the same.

The Minister for Railways: But there is a different Ministerial head.

Mr. Kenneally: Then does the Minister take the responsibility for having got rid of 2,000 men?

Mr. BROWN: The member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) said that the established farmer should be charged more than the struggling farmer, but I do not know how he could establish the difference between them. The farmer who has established himself and is in a big way is the man who is in great difficulties to-day.

The Minister for Railways: A man may be worth £30,000 on paper, and yet may not be able to borrow a shilling.

Mr. BROWN: That is quite true.

Mr. Kenneally: Even so, the man you refer to is far better off than the man in the city who has not been able to retain a home for himself and his family.

Mr. BROWN: Many of the men who are well established are not in a better position than the struggling farmers.

Mr. Kenneally: But they are in a better position than those who cannot pay rent in the towns to-day.

Mr. BROWN: A man may be sent out in the bush to develop a virgin block. He gets a certain amount of money from the Agricultural Bank, and for a number of years he is not in difficulties because he is getting money from the State. On the other hand the man who is established on a farm is working out his own destiny. Very often he has bought another farm.

Mr. Kenneally: Exactly. He speculates and builds up his assets.

Mr. BROWN: All that is to the benefit of the State.

Mr. Kenneally: You are building up a good case in support of my contention that the established man should be charged extra.

Mr. BROWN: The member for East Perth does not know what he is talking about. I regret that the railways are not paying. As many of them have been built to open up new areas, we cannot expect the Commissioner to make them pay from the inception. I realise we must have essential services throughout the country areas. Why are we getting so much produce transported by motor trucks? Is the traffic greater this year than it was last year?

Mr. H. W. Mann: It is about the same.

The Minister for Railways: No, it is greater.

Mr. BROWN: If the motor traffic is greater this year, then there is something wrong with the legislation we passed. Under it, charges were levied that were to run motor traffic off the road. If that traffic is greater now than ever, there is something wrong.

The Minister for Railways: What is wrong is that they work day and night, throughout the whole 24 hours.

Mr. BROWN: There is no doubt about that.

The Minister for Railways: They change on the running board.

Mr. BROWN: The Minister must recognise the fact that motor trucks have come to stay.

Mr. Marshall: Then why ask the Government for more railways?

Mr. BROWN: It might be of advantage to use motor trucks to feed our railways.

Mr. Marshall: If motor transport is so successful, why are you always asking for new railways?

Mr. BROWN: The Government might consider the advisability of constructing decent roads and establishing fleets of motor trucks to feed the railways. I placed that proposition before Sir Walter James when he was Premier. At that time the use of motor traction was in its infancy. Even to-day if my suggestion were adopted, it might be of advantage to the State. A road will not cost such a great deal.

The Minister for Railways: Could we not run trucks down through the 3,500 farms scheme?

Mr. BROWN: That is quite possible.

Mr. Marshall: Why raid the Government for any further railways if motor trucks are so successful?

Mr. BROWN: I am not touching upon that; that is a different matter altogether. I believe something could be done if the Government were to run their own motor trucks to feed the railways. I regret the railways are not paying. I should like to see all producers using the railways, for they belong to the people. Every man with any property in the State is a shareholder in the railways, and if the railways go to the bad by losing heavily, it will have to be made up by taxation. Even the men running the motor trucks will have to help make up any losses the railways suffer. I do ask the Minister to take into consideration the reduction of the minimum freight, for I feel sure that if the freights were reduced the railways would be better patronised than they are to-day.

[Mr. Richardson took the Chair.]

HON. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [10.2]: I should like to draw the attention of the Minister to the unsatisfactory service the railways are rendering to people in the back country.

Mr. H. W. Mann: A man told me he saved £400 by bringing down his wool from Wiluna by truck.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I had not proposed to be led into discussing that aspect of the question. I am not impressed by the brilliant suggestion of the member who has just sat down, that the Government should run motor trucks in competition with the railways. They should run both together, for if they run them in competition both will collapse. However, the Minister was right when he said the men on the motor trucks can bring down wool from Wiluna more

cheaply than can the railways, but only by working 24 hours per day. Many men are making merely a poor living by running motor trucks while they can stand up. If the railways could work their men the same hours, they would soon run the trucks off the road. I do not think much of the man who sends his products down by truck, particularly from the far-back country, merely because to send them by railway would cost him a few shillings more. For it must be remembered that, if it were not for the railways, we could not exist in the back country at all. I have no consideration for the man in the back country who uses the railways to supply the majority of his wants, and takes advantage of the motor trucks for special loading. If all were to do that there would be no railways at all, and then, as I say, we could not occupy the back country. But I want to draw the Minister's attention to the railway service in the back country. On the Murchison we get two direct services per week. That is very unsatisfactory. The other day, when passengers had to change at Mullewa for the Murchison, I found there were only two carriages reserved for passengers, and in one compartment there were nine or ten persons. It was absolutely overcrowded. Yet those people were travelling from 500 to 700 miles. It is a scandalous way to treat long-distance passengers. On the return journey from the Murchison the trains pick up stock at Meekatharra and so the passengers have to travel behind seven or eight bogeys filled with cattle, and in an obnoxious odour all the way. The atmosphere is perfectly unbearable. I have never seen anything so primitive as to require passengers to travel all the way from Meekatharra behind cattle. Yet that is the service we are getting in the back country, and I draw attention to it as something that requires remedying as soon as possible. The Commissioner in his report points out that a considerable number of the staff have been dispensed with, and that in consequence maintenance has been reduced to a minimum. Whatever may be said in the House, there is a general consensus of opinion in the country that our railways are being sadly neglected, and are going back. It is a common occurrence for engines or trucks to leave the rails. It is freely said that maintenance is being wholly neglected. This should be of interest to the Minister for Lands, for I find that, according to the

"Primary Producer," he made an important announcement at Kondinin. He is reported as follows:—

The Minister made an important pronouncement. He had referred to the fact that, unfortunately, it had been found necessary to dismiss many hundreds of men from the railways and other branches of the Government service, and had emphasised the statement that although these dismissals had been made the service to the people had not been curtailed. This demonstrated, he said, that the services had been overstaffed, and that the reduction in staffs should have been made at a time when the dismissed men could have been absorbed in other duties. The fact that they were thrown on the unemployed market at this time had added greatly to the difficulties of Government, for no man could be allowed to starve. The unbusiness-like methods of past Governments could not be allowed to continue in the future.

The Minister for Lands: The statement is true.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It is not true.

Mr. Kenneally: It is about as true as the average statement of the Minister.

Hon. M. F. TROY: If the Minister were not so young and inexperienced, he would know that on a previous occasion a similar course was adopted, and the succeeding Government had to spend a million of money to bring up the belated repairs.

The Minister for Lands: I notice a certificate in the Commissioner's report.

Mr. Kenneally: It was there before. It is just the same as usual.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Perhaps the Minister did not notice this in the Commissioner's report—

Wherever possible staff have been dispensed with owing to the decreased business, while maintenance has been reduced to a minimum. As already stated, this means heavier charges in future years to bring the permanent way, rolling stock, etc., up to the required standard.

It is ridiculous to think that any Commissioner would allow the railways to be overstaffed by 2,000. In the Ways and Works alone 700 have been put off. They were all engaged in construction work, none of which is being done to-day. So the Minister did not tell the truth about it at all. He either did not know the facts or did not state the facts.

Mr. Kenneally: He did not know them.

Hon. M. F. TROY: What he calls a business policy is a penny-wise-pound-foolish policy. A subsequent Government will have to spend millions of pounds in

bringing the railways up to standard and improving the rolling stock. What the Government are doing is not carrying on the railways on business lines but starving the railways. The system is deteriorating and the expenditure of huge sums of money will be necessary in a few years to restore it. It is a preposterous policy. The railways may have been over-manned to the extent of 100 men or 200 men, but not to the extent of 2,000 men. If the officer in charge of the Midland workshops employed 700 men more than were necessary, he would not be fit for his job. What sort of a Commissioner would he be to carry 700 more men than were required?

Mr. H. W. Mann: There is no loan money available for construction.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Of course not.

Mr. Kenneally: The Minister should not have made the statement.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The member for Perth has given the explanation. The Commissioner, in his report, stated—

Wherever possible staff have been dispensed with owing to the decreased business, while maintenance has been reduced to a minimum. As already stated, this means heavier charges in future years to bring the permanent way, rolling stock, etc., up to the required standard, but in the existing circumstances, no other course could be justified.

Of course he has got the money. When a Minister goes into the country and addresses the people, he should state the facts.

The Minister for Lands: See the Commissioner's certificate as to maintenance on page 47 of the report.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I read the "Primary Producer" and I often find that Ministers go into the country and make statements behind our backs.

The Minister for Lands: I am glad to know you read it.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I do not read it from choice. I read it with interest because the Minister is not prepared to say those things in the House, but he goes to some bush hamlet in association with the member for Pingelly and makes those statements.

Mr. Kenneally: In the hope that we will not see them.

The Minister for Works: You have a habit of digging into those things.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We have treated the Government generously.

The Minister for Works: You treat anyone generously!

Hon. M. F. TROY: But if Ministers go out into the country and make such misleading statements, I will rattle the Government.

The Minister for Works: I would like to see anybody you could rattle.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister lost his head on one occasion.

The Minister for Works: I rattled you one night.

Hon. M. F. TROY: For some time you were treading on air.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. M. F. TROY: You began to think you were a wonderful man.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. M. F. TROY: You are merely a political accident as far as Ministerial rank is concerned. As a matter of fact, I am told that you spoke to your family as you speak here.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot allow personalities.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister has a record.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow any personalities.

Hon. M. F. TROY: If he indulges in personalities, I will give his record. I will straighten the Government up one of these nights.

The Minister for Works: And I will do a bit of straightening up, too.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We have given the Government a very fair deal, and then we read in their paper that Ministers have gone into the country and made statements under the lap, telling people things that are not facts. That sort of thing must not be allowed to continue. In my opinion the railways have been sadly neglected; they are deteriorating, and to restore them will cost the State millions of pounds in the years to come.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [10.15]: For a few moments I wish to delve into a subject better known in the last century than in this. During my remarks I hope to indicate to the Minister for Railways a direction wherefrom he can substantially increase the revenue of his railways, materially cut his costs and add, I think, to the general revenue of the State. Members will recollect that, when the Premier was introducing the Estimates he indicated that the State was too greatly dependent on a few exportable commodities. He went on to

say that we should extend the list. I certainly agree with him. I am entitled therefore to ask, "What about coal and particularly what about Irwin coal?" Irwin coal, I think, has, by experiments to which I shall refer later, proved itself to be a particularly good coal within easy reach of a port and a suitable coal for overseas markets. Members may have forgotten, if ever they knew, the wonderful coal possibilities that underlie that big area in the Victoria district known as the Irwin area. I sometimes think that the claims of the Irwin seam have been more or less deliberately repressed and side-tracked. I do not assert that that is so, although I sometimes feel there are reasons for saying it. I should like the indulgence of members while I present some authentic data. Back in the year 1846—some 85 years ago—the then State Geologist, Mr. Gregory, lit what I believe was the first fire made from Western Australian coal. The fire was lit upon the banks of the Irwin River, and the coal used on that occasion was found in the bed of the river. I can quite easily imagine the old geologist, with his enthusiasm, found far more interest in his fire than in his meal on that occasion. His geological knowledge led him to know on that occasion that he had discovered something of very great value to his native State, and the only thing, I believe, that prevented his knowledge from coming to the desired fruition was Government apathy. Thirty-five years afterwards John Thompson, a practical miner from the Ayrshire mines in Scotland, took a hand in the game. At very great personal risk and after undergoing considerable difficulties, he managed to break some 17 tons of coal from the Irwin seam. It was taken very laboriously over the sandhills to Geraldton and there, by arrangement with the owners of the steamer "Rob Roy," was put on board the boat, and with that coal the boat steamed to Fremantle. It is of consequence to know that the captain of the vessel said that the Irwin coal had answered admirably and, what was more to the point, the engineers reported that the coal had in every way given complete satisfaction.

Mr. H. W. Mann: That was before Collie was discovered.

Mr. DONEY: Yes, years before. It should be borne in mind that surface coal was used in that experiment, and surface coal, of course, is notoriously of a far poorer

quality than that which is secured deeper down. Shortly after this a further trial was made in a railway engine running between Mullewa and Geraldton. The train hauled by the engine arrived well inside the scheduled time.

The Minister for Agriculture: Does it always do that?

Mr. DONEY: I am not prepared to say. A further trial was made by the Government at Midland Junction, but unfortunately the results were not made public. Other samples were taken from the seam worked by Mr. Johnstone, and sent to Perth for analysis. The result showed that the calorific value of the sample was very high. Dr. Simpson, the Government Mineralogist, in commenting upon his analysis, said that the calorific value of the sample compared with previous specimens of coal from the district, was highly satisfactory. He also commented upon the low percentage of ash. He said it was only fair to point out that the sample analysed had become thoroughly air-dried in transit, and when full allowance had been made for that, the calorific value remained highly satisfactory, especially when it had to be remembered that the coal was obtained only at a depth of about 42 feet and about 60 yards from the outcrop. A practical test of the coal by Mr. Johnstone showed that it burnt well with very little smoke, and he also said that it gave off practically no sparks.

Mr. Kenneally: He does not deal with the British thermal units, does he?

Mr. H. W. Mann: Is it worth while developing another coalfield?

Mr. DONEY: Having regard for the geographical position of this field, and the fact that it is nearly 3,000 miles nearer to certain overseas markets than other coalfields in Australia, I should say it would be advantageous.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It is not 3,000 miles from Collie.

Mr. DONEY: No coal is exported from Collie but it is exported from Newcastle, with which place I was comparing Geraldton. There is a difference in favour of Geraldton as regards overseas markets, of between 2,500 and 3,000 miles. At any rate, the Irwin field would save a haulage from Collie of about 400 miles. Dr. Simpson's report indicates that Irwin coal gives off practically no sparks.

Mr. Kenneally: What is the date of that report you have referred to?

Mr. DONEY: It would probably have been written in 1897.

Mr. Kenneally: Quite modern.

Mr. DONEY: The report is an authentic one and is based on analyses made by the Government Mineralogist.

Mr. Kenneally: It was a genuine report at the time, but other discoveries have been made since.

Mr. DONEY: That does not discount the value of this one.

Mr. Kenneally: Soft coal is no good for export.

Mr. DONEY: The quality of the coal is the same now as it was in 1876.

Mr. Kenneally: I would not say that of the hon. member.

Mr. DONEY: Dr. Simpson goes on to say that the coal weathers far better than might have been expected. He continues—

A sample placed in a position of maximum exposure to the sun's rays only showed signs of darkening after a period of nearly three weeks.

He also referred to the difficulties experienced by Mr. Johnstone and indicated that the operations had for the time being been given up. The State Mining Engineer, Mr. Montgomery, says, "Somewhat better than the average Collie mineral." I have no desire to disparage Collie coal, but when the State Mining Engineer refers to Irwin coal in those terms, one can only assume that it is a reasonably good coal. Members must not lose sight of the economic value of competition between the two fields. There is a further report by the State Geologist that may interest the member for East Perth. That officer said—

The greater part of the sample submitted is a clean, hard, bright, bituminous coal, with which are associated a few small duller pieces, which may perhaps represent stone partings in the seam, and to which the comparatively high percentage of ash may be due. The coal is of the coking variety, yielding a dense, hard coke of good quality. The percentage of moisture is low, being about the same as that of Newcastle coal. The ash, though high, does not clinker readily, the coal in this respect, as in many others, resembling the New South Wales southern districts coal. In heating capacity the sample is superior to the best Collie coal, and about 16 per cent. better than the average of 23 samples from the Collie coalfield quoted in Bulletin No. 6 of this department. In this respect it is about 10 per cent. less efficient than good Newcastle coal. This coal appears well suited for all ordinary purposes, coke making, gas making, and steam raising in either stationary, marine or locomotive boilers.

Members do not need any more to assure them that in the Irwin seams we have an asset of the highest value to the State. The authentic data I have referred to indicates this. Since the war I believe nothing has been done there, although five or six years ago the member for Geraldton brought the matter up in the House, and probably submitted the same data as I am submitting. Apparently, however, he did not achieve any great measure of success. It seems now that private enterprise, as represented by the activities of Mr. Johnstone, has exhausted its resources. Mr. Johnstone himself is something like 75 years old. He has borne the brunt of this pioneering work and all the expenses and now at the end of 50 years of effort we see him, despite his deserts, going down to the grave a disappointed and impoverished man.

Mr. Kenneally: Perhaps the Minister could give you some reports from the Commissioner concerning trials made by the Railway Department.

Mr. DONEY: A minute or two ago I drew attention to the fact that a trial of this coal was made at Midland Junction, but that the results of the trial were kept secret by the Government, for some reason unknown to me. I am not for a moment suggesting any monetary favours for Mr. Johnstone, nor does that gentleman seek any. He would, I believe, be quite satisfied if in return for his sacrifices extending over some 50 years the field could be opened up and made of some use to the State.

The Minister for Railways: Is not the coal a part of the Midland Railway Company's assets?

Mr. DONEY: I am quite prepared to admit that, but I do not see that the fact constitutes any objection to the coal being used. If the coal is comparable with, say, Collie coal, the circumstance that it happens to be on the Midland Railway Company's land makes it none the less accessible to the Railway Department. All we need do in this case is to give the Midland Company permission to build a spur line of 16½ miles. Although the present Government have not been approached on the subject, past Governments certainly have been. I know that one Ministry, although not agreeing to the building of the line from Mingenew eastward, made a suggestion that the coalfield should be linked up with a siding on the Wongan Hills line—a stupid suggestion in-

volving great economic waste in unnecessary haulage of the coal. There are difficulties associated with the development of the field, but they are outweighed by the huge potential advantages to the State. The question of cost need not worry the Government at all. The cost to the country will be nothing. The money to build the spur line is, I am given to understand, at easy call in the Old Country. I am not able to assert that the coal is a good bunkering coal; but it is said to be very much like the Cardiff coal of the Old Country, giving forth just a little whitish smoke. Coal of that kind is of the type favoured by the British Navy and likely to secure no lack of demand by our warships in the Indian and Pacific oceans, besides being within easy striking distance of Singapore, Colombo and other coaling stations.

Mr. Sampson: What is meant by the calorific value of this coal?

Mr. DONEY: Its calorific value is indicated by its capacity for giving forth heat. I stated previously that the value was considered highly satisfactory.

Mr. Kenneally: Surely the hon. member knows that ash and other things have to be taken into consideration with regard to coal.

Mr. DONEY: If I cared to weary the House, I could give the analyses; but I do not wish particularly to do it at this hour of the night. If the hon. member interjecting is prepared to peruse some authentic data, I shall be glad to supply it.

Mr. Kenneally: I was engaged in burning that coal for about 20 years, and ought to know something about it. I would like information about the usefulness of the coal. The hon. member could get from the Minister information concerning a trial of the coal, and that would be of assistance to the hon. member's case.

Mr. DONEY: The one thing that stands in the way of the development of the coal seam is the Midland Company's failure to obtain permission to build the spur line.

The Minister for Railways: I am not yet satisfied that a coal field exists there. There is a difference between having a coal seam and having a coal field.

Mr. DONEY: It is hardly to be expected that private enterprise would develop the coal without a railway. Coal could not be carted 16½ miles to a railway over sandhills. I have referred to two or three analyses, and have given the opinions of two Government Geologists, one State Mining

Engineer, and one State Mineralogist. I do not know what more is wanted.

The Minister for Railways: We know there is a limited quantity of coal there, but we do not know that there is a coal field there.

Mr. DONEY: I presume the Government did not originally know that there was a coal field at Collie.

The Minister for Railways: Quite true.

Mr. DONEY: Why not give this coal field the same chance as was given to Collie? We have it on the word of the State Geologist, Dr. Simpson, that this is better coal than the average of the Collie coals. I am of opinion that this Irwin seam can make good its case; and I would like the Minister, when replying, to state whether he can indicate the prospects of the Midland Railway Company being given permission to build the spur line.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [10.38]: There are one or two points in connection with this Vote that I desire to bring before the Government. One relates to the lack of transport facilities for people between Bayswater and Maylands. Of recent years the population in that district has increased considerably; and some consideration should be given to the putting-in of a siding, even if only for use during the peak period to pick up and set down passengers. People located between Maylands and Bayswater have at present a long walk to their transport facilities. On either side the tramway is a considerable distance from them. The time has arrived when train facilities, at all events, should be made available to them. The train that carries working people to work should stop at the proposed siding to pick up and set down passengers, and the same remark applies to the train which brings these people back from their work. If trains could stop at the siding two or three times per day in addition, it would give eminent satisfaction to the people concerned. There is no doubt the population has increased rapidly from the far end of Maylands towards Bayswater.

The Minister for Railways: That has been due to the tramway extensions.

Mr. HEGNEY: That may be so, but many people have to walk a long way before they can make use of the tramway facilities. Both on the Guildford side and the northern side, the people have to traverse a consider-

able distance before they can reach a railway station.

Mr. Angelo: Have you no up-to-date buses there?

Mr. HEGNEY: I am glad to say that we have not. The district is served by railway and tramway facilities only. An extension of about a third of a mile is required to carry the Beaufort-street line through Inglewood to Salisbury-road. The tramway there has not the disadvantage of bus competition, and I hope there will be no such opposition for many years to come. Seeing that the people of Claremont are agitating so consistently to get rid of the tramway to Westana-road, I hope the Minister will consider lifting those rails and utilising them for the purpose of the Beaufort-street extension. I believe that line is one of the most payable in the metropolitan area, and I urge the Government to give consideration to the proposal. The two matters I have referred to will not involve the expenditure of much money.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [10.43]: Much has been said regarding the condition of the rolling stock and the permanent way, and I support those who have drawn the Minister's attention to that phase, and have endeavoured to impress upon him the necessity of relinquishing the policy that has caused the dismissal of so many railway employees, and has resulted in the rolling stock being in such a deplorable state of repair. The permanent way is not receiving the attention that could be desired. We have had previous experience of this type of policy, and it has afforded us further proof of the old saying that it is a penny wise and pound foolish policy to be parsimonious in connection with the maintenance of a highly-capitalised proposition such as our State railways. In 1910 the Government of the day pursued much the same policy as that operating to-day. Rolling stock was allowed to get into a state of bad repair, and, generally speaking, the conditions throughout the railways were not up to standard. The Government who took office in 1911 received an alarming report from the then Commissioner of Railways. One Government had starved the maintenance of rolling stock and permanent way, and the Commissioner had to call upon the next Government to make up the leeway that had been caused during their predecessors' term of office. At that

time there were the Midland Workshops and the State Implement Works at Rocky Bay. Both were kept busy. In addition, special workshops had to be erected in order that contracts might be let to a firm at Maylands. Not only did we keep the three concerns operating, but the men at Midland Junction were required to work overtime in order to cope with reconditioning. The saving effected by the Government prior to 1911 was all lost as a result of the special contracts that had to be entered into for the manufacture of additional rolling stock, and the overtime rates that had to be paid in effecting repairs. We may have a repetition of that.

The Minister for Railways: The circumstances were not the same.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: One cannot say that the circumstances were identical, but the Minister knows possibly better than I do, seeing that he was Treasurer at the time, exactly what the policy meant to the country. He was called upon to make up the enormous leeway and the cost was excessive compared with what it would have been had the work been carried out gradually.

The Minister for Railways: It was done for the one purpose of impressing upon the public the importance of balancing the Budget. In this instance, the position has arisen because no money is available.

Hon. M. F. Troy: But it was done just the same.

The Minister for Railways: Of course it was.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It was for economy purposes.

The Minister for Railways: It is not for economy now; it is because there are no funds available at all.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I believe that the Commissioner of Railways may not realise the special circumstances in connection with the present harvest. It is true that there will not be the quantity of wheat to lift this year compared with last year. Sales were irregular last year, and it was simply for the railways to get the necessary quantity of wheat to the port so as to be available for the pool or some other organisation to sell and charter boats when possible. Not only was the price unattractive last year, but sales were very difficult to make. If it had not been for the sales effected to countries in the Far East, we would never have got rid of the wheat pro-



duced. We were fortunate in securing special sales to Japan and China. The position this year is totally different. The prices are firming, and it is quite possible that sales may be made in the early part of the year, as distinct from the circumstances that operated last year.

The Minister for Railways: And after the sales, what then?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Sales have to be made and the chartering is done in proportion to the capacity of the railways to deliver. The pool authorities confer with the Railway Department and arrive at an understanding as to what can be done. The pool thereafter charter in proportion to the capacity of the railways to deliver at the port, and at the same time take into consideration the possibility of the world utilising the wheat. Even if the world could consume more wheat the pool could not charter more vessels, because the railways could not deliver more wheat at the ports. In previous years the railways have had great difficulty in filling the boats that had been chartered. That was at a time when marketing had been speeded up and it was necessary that the sales be expedited. This year we are going to have similar conditions, and I ask the Minister to remember that the exchange is going to play an important part in the value of our wheat. To-day the exchange makes our returns from the wheat of special value, because money is so much more valuable in London. I do not think that can go on indefinitely. I believe we shall have to reduce the exchange, but in the meantime we want to do the best we can in the selling of our wheat. I should say the pool trustees will be specially keen to make as many sales as possible in order to get the advantage of the exchange while it lasts. If so, that will be another reason for expediting the transport of wheat to the ports. I know the Minister has an undertaking from the Commissioner of Railways, and I agree that the Commissioner generally exercises great care before he definitely declares upon any situation. Nevertheless I do not think the Commissioner at the time he made that declaration knew of the special circumstances that have since arisen in the value of wheat and the demand for wheat. Again, I venture to say the Commissioner has not taken into consideration the possible reduction of the exchange rate. We have an enormous number of trucks stored in various remote parts

of the railway system, trucks that in ordinary circumstances would be in the repair shop to-day. It is the general practice of the department to prepare in anticipation of the transport of the harvest, but to-day there is no special activity in that regard. Railway trucks have got into disrepair to a very great extent, and the special circumstances that have arisen, particularly during the last few weeks, should cause the Minister to review the policy and see whether he has sufficient trucks repaired up to the standard required to transport wheat over long distances. Then to-day we have more locomotives stored at Midland Junction than ever before, and also in the Ways and Works. They are all in a state of disrepair and I question whether the Minister will have sufficient locomotive power to cope with the transport of wheat, for it will have to be done considerably faster than it was done last year. It is a question whether it would not be better for the Government to prepare for the expeditious transport of the wheat rather than leave the repairs until they have to be faced, and then possibly be done at overtime rates. Again, if we were to start now it might be possible to pick up the expert tradesmen whose services have been dispensed with and who to a very large extent are scattered over various parts of the State, and even outside the State. If we want to get the services of those men for the preparation of the trucks for the transport of the harvest, we require to start getting them now. If it is left too late, not only will it be expensive because of the rush, but there may be difficulties in getting the men required. That phase of the problem requires to be taken into consideration, and I should like the Minister to consult the pool trustees on the special circumstances. It would be quite wrong for the trustees to continue chartering on the basis of the full capacity of the railways, or in other words to take the Commissioner's report as we take it, and then find there was so large a number of trucks in disrepair, so large a reduction in the number of trucks available, that the trustees had to reduce the chartering for the transport of wheat overseas. The Commissioner's admission that the rolling stock is reduced in numbers as compared with other years may cause the trustees to reduce their chartering in proportion and so show a great loss to the wheat growers and consequently to the State. Moreover,

the chartering is rendered somewhat more difficult and the responsibilities of the railways increased by the fact that at one time we shipped our wheat mostly in one direction, that is to say, to Great Britain and European ports on the track to Great Britain. But last year we sold wheat to the Far East; indeed most of our wheat was sold up there. This year we are selling quite a lot for forward delivery, and it is all in the same direction. The result is we are chartering on the double route, in the ordinary way to meet the demands of Great Britain and the European nations that purchase our wheat, and in addition we are selling in increasing quantities to the Far East. The responsibility of the railways has increased and we have to cope with the demand from Great Britain and those nations that have been purchasing from us for years, as well as from purchasers in the Far East.

Mr. Griffiths: Are we selling much wheat to the Continent?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, but the indications are that the Continent will be a buyer. I do not know what sales have been effected by the pool trustees, but if the Continent started to buy wheat, our wheat would be preferred. If Germany and France start to buy, it is fair to assume that we shall make a fair number of sales. India is an exporting country but she buys wheat from us, and that applies to a limited extent to other countries also; but European countries do not produce sufficient wheat for their own requirements. Germany, it is reported, is buying extensively from America. It is quite possible that no purchase of Australian wheat will be made by Germany. That is a matter upon which nobody can pronounce, except those who are actually operating. The knowledge we gain from present reports indicates that European countries will not have the quantity of wheat they had last year, but will be on the market as purchasers of Australian wheat. I want the Minister to appreciate that the conditions this year are different from a marketing point of view from those of last year, and I would particularly like him to consider the exchange position and see that the Commissioner of Railways discusses the matter with the pool trustees. If he finds that we are going to save pence to the railways and lose pounds to the State in the marketing of our wheat, I hope he will alter the policy. Regarding road com-

petition with the railways, it seems that we are to be disappointed in the actual effect of the amending Traffic Act passed last year. I voiced the opinion on that occasion that the measure was not drastic enough, considering the danger of road transport to the continued maintenance and operation of our railways. I repeat what I pointed out then, that the population has not increased with the extension and expansion of road transport. If population does not increase proportionately to an increased activity that involves capital and maintenance expenditure, it becomes a very serious matter. The same number of people who fail to maintain the railway system cannot possibly succeed in maintaining roads also. If our population increased proportionately to the increase of road traffic, we could say, "The position is sound. The number of people in the State has increased proportionately, and the capacity of the people to maintain the extra burden is assured." But that is not the position. Either we have to neglect the maintenance of our roads or neglect the maintenance of our railways. Certainly we cannot maintain both, and the danger is that we shall do a little maintenance of roads and a little maintenance of railways. That is what is actually taking place.

The Minister for Railways: We cannot afford otherwise.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It goes to show that we must review the traffic situation. Other States of the Commonwealth have coped with it. They have realised, as we must realise, that the people of Australia are not increasing in number sufficiently to maintain air and road transport in addition to rail transport. No doubt when we entered upon the main roads expenditure, we were of opinion that the general expansion would be maintained proportionately to the general increase of previous years. But that has stopped. When we find that population is not increasing proportionately to the activities and expenditure, action must be taken, even if drastic, to put a stop to competition that threatens to ruin all activities. I hope the Government will not hesitate to make further propositions to protect the railways against the unfair competition of to-day. We cannot expect the railways to carry commodities at a loss while the more lucrative traffic is carried by motor transport. It is worth while going into the question

raised by one or two speakers whether the Government should not extend their activities by utilising motor transport as a feeder to the railways, thus helping centres where motor transport is necessary to overcome their difficulties of isolation, not by bringing competition to the railways, but by enabling the railways to operate in such a way as to meet all the demands of the people. I have mentioned that the maintenance of rolling stock has been neglected. This has enabled the Government to dispense with the services of a number of railway workers. In my electorate about 800 men have been dismissed from the Midland workshops.

Mr. Griffiths: As many as that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. The Minister of Lands, according to the newspaper report, conveyed to the public—whether intentionally or not, I do not know—that the retrenchments made in the railways were due to the service having been grossly overmanned, rather than because of the neglect of maintenance. It is quite incorrect to put it that way. Locomotives are stored up not only in the workshops area, but in other parts of the railway system. Trucks are also stored. Practically no new work is going on. New work is carried out from loan funds, whereas maintenance is done from revenue. The railways have not the revenue to go on maintaining the rolling stock, and have no loan funds with which to build rolling stock. A calamity will follow sooner or later, but meanwhile it is wrong for the Minister or anyone else to try to convey the idea that the administrative capacity of the Government is such that they can maintain the services of the State with a considerably reduced staff.

Mr. Kenneally: Reduced by 2,000.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: We know well that the services are not being maintained, and that there is a grave danger of the work that will ultimately require to be done costing considerably more than if it were done gradually, as has always been the policy. I should like the Minister to give us some information concerning the savings that have been effected on the salaried side of the railway expenditure compared with the savings on the wages side. I have no desire to suggest dismissals on the part of any other railway workers, but as administrators of the affairs of the State, we have to see that, if the staff is not there to be supervised, the

supervision is reduced in proportion to the depletion of the numbers of men, and the cessation of operations compared with what was going on previously. There is a feeling amongst railway workers, particularly the retrenched men, that justice has not been done, and that whilst the wage worker has been put off and retrenchments of a drastic nature have occurred, the administrative side of the system has not borne its fair share of the burden, and that men are being held in posts where the work is not sufficient to justify their retention.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think that is justified.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It would be easy for the Minister to get the information.

The Minister for Railways: I got all these percentages out at the time, and I know it is not justified.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It would be interesting to know just what the position is. The Minister could make a comparison between the number of men who were at the workshops at Midland Junction, and the number of supervising officers whose services have been dispensed with, and ascertain whether each side is carrying a fair share of the burden imposed under the Government policy. Reference has been made to the unfair position with regard to the electricity supply from the power house. My constituency is very much concerned about the price that is being paid for current from the power house, compared with the charges that are imposed upon others. Last year, when introducing the Estimates, the Minister drew special attention to the matter, and very rightly explained that the original agreement arrived at between him and the Perth City Council was not operating as was anticipated. He pointed out that the cost of supplying current was estimated at a given figure. That figure was based on the actual facts existing at the time, and formed the basis of the cost to the City Council, and also the basis upon which the agreement was drawn up. At that time the position seemed to be a sound one. The war then intervened. The cost of installation of plant increased, as did the cost of Colliie coal as well as other things. The result has been that we have never been able to get the current produced for anything like the original estimated cost. This cannot go on indefinitely. I support the contention of the member for Geraldton that agreements

throughout Australia, having a financial bearing upon State or Commonwealth Government activities, and agreements controlled to a great extent by private individuals, should be subject to review. By this agreement the Perth City Council made a profit of £70,000 out of the consumers of electric current. They did this by buying the current from the people of the State at a low price. The council are buying the commodity under cost and have been able to make enormous profits out of it. They can only get that profit at the cost of the other consumers, who have to pay excessive prices. This is where my constituency comes in. The Bassendean Road Board, the Guildford Municipal Council and the Midland Junction Municipal Council all purchase current wholesale from the power house. They complain about the charges they have to impose upon their own consumers, because those charges do not compare with the charges imposed in the area controlled by the Perth City Council.

Mr. Griffiths: The charges should be reviewed.

The Minister for Railways: It is not fair to make that comparison.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is always made.

The Minister for Railways: It is not a fair comparison.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know there is a way to alter that to a certain extent. The Minister will claim that the local governing bodies are middlemen, that if the consumers were to deal direct with the power house they could get current cheaper than was possible from a local governing body.

The Minister for Railways: I do not suggest anything of the kind. The price paid by the municipality of Midland Junction and the Perth City Council is not a fair comparison. The Perth City Council were partners with us, whereas the Midland Junction municipality never was.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would have no objection to that if the Minister carried it out and realised that the contract with the Perth City Council was on a wrong basis. The original basis has been proved to be unsound, as a result of special circumstances. The price charged by the Perth City Council can only be maintained to-day by reason of Midland Junction being specially penalised.

The Minister for Railways: The principle of the agreement was a partnership.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is not a partnership to-day. Is it not possible for the Minister to have the contract reviewed? The member for Geraldton said this was the opportune time to do it. We are reviewing contracts of this description. Suppose we were not reviewing these contracts. Here is an outstanding contract which might be reviewed by Parliament, because it is unfair for one section of the community, whereas it benefits other sections. To say that the people of Perth right through to Bayswater shall receive special consideration, and that in order to extend this consideration to them, people beyond that boundary must be penalised, is altogether wrong. That is exactly the position to-day. I would not care if it operated for only a brief period; but it has been going on for many years, under changes of Railway Commissioners and changes of Government. No matter what is done to-day, the difficulty cannot be remedied while the agreement is maintained.

The Minister for Railways: The way out would be a trust embracing all the territory served.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That again would create a difficulty. We have the one power house; and the Minister's idea is to put the power house, the tramways, and electric lighting under a trust. He would take into consideration the area served to-day, and form the trust on that basis. But immediately there was expansion, we would have a repetition of the existing position. It is impossible to get a trust to fit the situation as it would be if under the people's control. To say that ratepayers shall control electric current is distinctly wrong. There are trusts and trusts, however; and the Minister might be able to put forward some means of trust control that would be acceptable to the citizens. But there would be great difficulty in overcoming the trouble through the establishment of a trust to control. When introducing these Estimates last year, the Minister said that something would have to be done. Twelve months have passed, and nothing has resulted. Representatives of the outer suburban area are constantly being reminded that their people are suffering injustice. My constituents frequently urge me to make representations to the Government concerning the need for relief. I know

that my constituency is not the only one concerned, and I know that the Government cannot grant relief without reviewing the position relatively to the Perth City Council. I hope we shall stop talking in regard to the matter, and take some action. Action is necessary. We must not go on penalising one section in order to placate another. I hope that the Minister, in replying, will give further assurances with regard to the transport of wheat. I hope he will assure the Committee that he will see the Commissioner of Railways has a conference with the wheat pool trustees for the purpose of arriving at a complete understanding with regard to the special circumstances which have arisen during the last few weeks. I hope also that the Minister will give some figures as to relative economies in supervision and salaried staff on the one hand, and retrenchment of wages men on the other. Lastly, I would like an intimation that something will be done regarding the agreement between the Government and the Perth City Council as to electric current.

**MR. GRIFFITHS** (Avon) [11.25]: There is very little one can say in these stressful times to improve the position. I wish to draw the attention of the Minister for Railways to the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into disabilities affecting the agricultural industry of Western Australia. Page 27 of the report, under the heading "Railway Freights—Charges on Wheat and Wool," states—

From the evidence, your Commissioners recommend that all Government charges on wheat and wool be revised and brought into the same lines as were current before the war; the rates were no doubt increased in view of the high prices ruling at the time, but with the decreased market prices, rates should be reduced in conformity therewith. Railway freights on wheat have practically increased 15.8 per cent., and 17.5 per cent. on wool, since 1914. In view of the low prices prevailing for wool and wheat, your Commissioners are of the opinion that railway freights should be reduced; a decrease in tonnage of wheat and wool (which must follow unprofitable returns to the primary producer) must eventually more adversely affect the earnings of the Railway Department and render economies more drastic than if the present position is met in a ready manner by the department.

I stress this because as to the agricultural industry there is at present an optimistic feeling abroad that because the price of wheat is hardening and things at the moment

look promising, everything is all right. Everything will not be all right for the wheat industry unless the cost of production is reduced. I know it is hard to ask the Government to reduce the cost of transport, or indeed the cost of any service, just at present; but the position is that if the wheat industry is to be kept alive, the cost of production must be reduced.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: The cost of marketing.

**Mr. GRIFFITHS**: The cost of marketing and the tariff.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: You do not pay wages now.

**Mr. GRIFFITHS**: The position is impossible; and if it continues, nothing but disaster is ahead. I have reiterated this again and again in this Chamber. I have nothing particularly to say regarding the Railway Department. Here are recommendations that there must be all-round reduction of costs in the handling of our wheat and our wool. I make no requests to the Minister. There are many things wanted in my electorate, but I refrain from asking for them at the present juncture. It is a well-known fact, reiterated and reiterated here to-night, that railway rolling stock, railway buildings, and railway stations are in want of renewals and painting; but we are so reduced now, as we were in the war, that we must be content to let things alone for the time being, and merely do as well as we can.

**MR. PIESSE** (Katanning) [11.30]: With other members I regret that the Railway Department has not experienced a more profitable year. In view of all the circumstances, that result can easily be understood in view of the extent to which primary production has suffered during the past year. There is no question about the competition of motor transport with our railways. I hope the Government will investigate the position fully with a view to securing justice for our railways. We know that motor transport is picking the eyes out of the available traffic and securing much of the high priced consignments. Motor transport would not be prepared to carry the farmers' fertilisers at the rate charged by the railways. We must take a sober, sane view of the situation and act accordingly. Quite recently the extent of the motor competition

in the Katanning electorate was brought under my notice. In these days, the business community in that part of the State seem to be more inclined to support the railways than road transport, but very often they are forced into patronising the cheaper form of transport owing to business competition. I had an opportunity to arrange for a responsible officer of the Railway Department to meet the business people at Katanning, and I hope that much of the competition that is apparent now will be obviated. From a State point of view it must be realised that the fuel required for motor transport purposes has to be imported from a foreign country, and that is most uneconomic. We must educate the people to the fact that if they do not themselves patronise our railways instead of motor transport, their position will be adversely affected. The losses made during the year are a charge upon the State as a whole and must be paid by those having vested interests in the State. A good deal of criticism was levelled at the Commissioner of Railways regarding the freight on wool, which is one of the most profitable commodities for motor transport. There are many who believe that if the Commissioner, early in the season, had reduced the freight on wool by 20 per cent. instead of 10 per cent., much of the wool that now is transported by road would have been lifted by the railways. In many instances it is merely necessary to impress upon the farmers the importance of improving the railway returns, and that if they do not support the railways, it will be necessary to increase the freights on fertilisers and other essential lines in order to overcome the loss. The cost of production must be kept down to the lowest possible level, and I do not want to see the freight increased on any of the essentials for primary production. As it is, to-day the primary producing community are mostly working at a decided loss. There is no room left for increased freights on the commodities necessary to the farmer and carried over the railways at allegedly unpayable rates. Then again the Commissioner of Railways should take into consideration the reduction of return fares over long distances and, generally speaking, making railway travelling more attractive to passengers. It is regrettable that such well equipped trains providing such a good service should be so poorly patronised through-

out the State. If the passenger traffic falls off much more, the Commissioner will have to curtail the service. Every endeavour has been made to keep our railways up to date, and we may well be proud of the service provided. It is unfortunate that competition even in passenger traffic should be encountered by our railways. Apart from motor transport, there is the possibility of competition in the air. Landing grounds are being provided at each large town, and there is not the least doubt that in the future there will be serious competition by air. The Commissioner should take notice of the requests of business people who advocate a review of the rate book. The Commissioner recognises the competition that exists on the part of motor transport. I know he is making inquiries, but business people complain that such a long time elapses before any definite conclusion is arrived at by the Commissioner regarding the amendment of the rate book. In my opinion, the Government or Parliament would be well advised to appoint a board of experts to consider means by which production from land adjacent to the railways might be fostered. For a State having a small population, we have an enormous mileage of railways, and it is essential that we produce as much as possible from the land contiguous to our railways. Every encouragement should be given to the farmers to produce under the best possible methods, and to grow those commodities for which their land is most suitable. In my opinion, the Government should give earnest attention to that phase. I hope that during the coming year improved operations will result in more profitable returns to the railways. No one regrets more than I do the fact that the services of so many of the staff have had to be dispensed with, and also that those who are still retained in the service have been called upon to make additional sacrifices. I hope that during the forthcoming year conditions will so improve that the railway service will return to normal, and that the men whose services have been dispensed with will be re-engaged.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [11.40]: I listened with interest to what the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock) had to say to-night. He certainly has given the matter a great deal of consideration. Naturally one is struck by the extent of the retrenchment in the Railway Depart-

ment, some 2,000 men having been put off. One inevitable result will be an enormous bill for belated repairs at some time in the future. During the last couple of years we have had a number of accidents due to failure to satisfactorily maintain the permanent way. I had a look at the scene of one derailment, and I was not surprised to find that the sleepers had rotted out. Any expert travelling over 75 per cent. of the mileage of our railways would discover that every three sleepers in ten required replacing, and perhaps even more than that. Thousands of our men are out of work when they could be engaged on sustenance, relaying sleepers. We have the sleepers, and it is only a question of labour, and so I say men should be put on to do that work. Moreover, the Minister ought to consider the regrading of many of our lines. The grades between Donnybrook and Pemberton involve an unnecessary expenditure of from £40,000 to £50,000 per annum. It would be highly profitable to the department to have practically all the lines in the hilly country of the South-West regraded, much more profitable than carrying out some of the irrigation schemes. Not infrequently do we find an engine pulling half the load to the top of a hill and then going back for the other half. A few thousand pounds expended in regrading would be saved in the first few years. The problem confronting the Commissioner to-day is the road competition, not only in loading, but in passengers as well. Everywhere the farmers are sending their wool to market by motor truck. The Minister says it is done by running the trucks to a standstill, but I contend that is not the only reason. The Commissioner should reduce the freight on wool and capture the whole of that trade. It is an economic loss to the State to allow motor trucks to rob the railways of that freight. Again, everybody is travelling by motor car, simply because we do not make the railways attractive to passengers. We must run to a schedule time. Between Pemberton and Pictou they have a time table to run to, and you can find the drivers and guards sitting down waiting for the time for the train to pull out. They say it is an absolute farce, that they could cut 90 minutes off that run between Bridgetown and Donnybrook. Apparently the time table was first compiled some years ago when stone fruit had to be picked up at each siding and it remains

practically unaltered to-day. An amendment is required there, if only to render the journey by train more attractive to passengers. When we come to the accommodation provided, I cannot see why people riding second class should not get as much comfort as those riding first class.

Mr. Hegney: Why not make it all one class ?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, I would not do that, for if some people are prepared to pay extra for first class, why not let them do so ? But why, on the other hand, should poorer people have to travel in compartments like dog boxes, with seats as hard as jarrah ? On suburban lines up here, where comfort is not so much required, I notice that second-class carriages are better than those of the first class in country districts. At present, our trains are running empty because the department is not making railway travelling attractive. If people can come up by motor car at the same price as it would cost them by rail, of course they will come by car. That is another reason why our railways are not better patronised by the public and are not paying. The railway is the only method to open up and develop the country, but under the policy of making good roads alongside existing railways, competition has been introduced to the detriment of the railways. On those roads motors can travel at the rate of 40 or 50 miles an hour. To run from Bridgetown to Bunbury takes a motor 1½ hours, whereas by railway the journey occupies five hours. That is a reason why the railways are not patronised. The Commissioner of Railways should instruct an officer to make observations and revise the time tables, so that the service could be made more attractive. The Government have abolished many privileges that were previously granted. I refer particularly to the privilege granted to the Sisters of Mercy and teachers of different schools. At one time, when travelling from Bridgetown to Bunbury for a fortnight or three weeks, they received a privilege ticket at the price of a single fare for the return journey. I understand that that privilege has been cut out. The trains have to be run, and it would not make any difference to the Government to grant the privilege. Those teachers are doing good service for the country, and I want the Minister to consider the restoration of that privilege.

The Minister for Railways: It has nothing to do with the Commissioner, or with me.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Does not the Commissioner grant concession fares?

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I thought the Commissioner had everything to do with concessions and privileges.

The Minister for Railways: Passes are granted by the Premier's Department.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am not referring to free passes; I am referring to the privilege tickets that have been granted for years. I shall not weary members by talking about new railways. We should endeavour to encourage the people to use the railways. If it were possible to settle all the land along the existing railways, it would be in the best interests of the State. Timber pays one of the highest class freights. It is a struggling industry, and I would impress on the Minister to endeavour to reduce the freight. When we reaped one of our biggest harvests, the freight earned by the railways from wheat transportation fell short of the freight paid by timber in the same year by £100,000 odd, although the tonnage of timber carried was much less. On top of that the timber paid 2s. 6d. wharfage dues, while the wheat was shipped free of that charge. The timber industry is penalised by the rate of freight charged. If it is possible for the Minister to help a struggling industry, he should do so.

The Minister for Railways: I am astonished at that, coming from you.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Why?

The Minister for Railways: I did not know that you had any sympathy with the industry.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the Minister had half the sympathy I have for the industry, it would be better for the State. If he knew as much as I know about timber, he might be able to fulfil his job as Minister for Forests.

The Minister for Railways: It would take a long time to learn it from you.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister has not attempted to learn it yet.

The Minister from Railways: I could not learn it from you.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister has not attempted to learn it. I doubt whether he would know a jarrah tree from a red gum.

The Minister for Railways: I will show directly that I know as much about it as you do.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am asking the Minister to do something for a struggling industry.

The Minister for Railways: I have been doing it while you have been criticising in a way that could not help the industry.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister has been doing it by starting another trade concern and by tabling regulations. I shall have something to say on that subject later.

The Minister for Railways: I shall have something to say, too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am waiting for the Minister to say something about it. If the Minister had any sympathy for the industry, about which he professes to know so much, he would at least consider the question of lowering the railway freight.

The Minister for Railways: I am helping the industry.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister should not help one section at the expense of another.

The Minister for Railways: If I am helping one section it is a deserving section, not the Dagoes.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Dagoes are helping to make this State.

Hon. A. McCallum: To make what?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister is very sympathetic to the Dagoes, but he did not have much to say about the woodline strike when they held up the mining industry for three or four weeks. There is hardly a Britisher working on the wood line.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, there are Britishers.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Very few of them.

The Minister for Railways: I know there are not many Britishers cutting on private property.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Because they cannot cut on private property.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to point out that we are not discussing the timber industry.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have nothing further to say about the railways. I hope that where possible the Minister will reduce the freights on timber, whether cut by foreigners, and regardless of whether it comes from private property or Crown lands, because that makes no difference to the railways.

[*Mr. Angelo took the Chair.*]



**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [11.58]: I am rather disappointed that something has not been done to introduce the system of one class on the railways in the metropolitan area, if not throughout the State. Day after day one can see first-class carriages being hauled backwards and forwards, and only one or two passengers travelling in them. I believe the railways would be a better paying concern than they are if the one class were introduced.

Mr. Wells: If you had one class they would all be empty.

**MR. SLEEMAN**: The trams that run to the hon. member's constituency are not all empty. When the hon. member enters a tram he does not look for first-class accommodation. In a char-a-banc he does not look for first-class, and the same applies to a taxi. The two-class system has outgrown its usefulness, more especially in the metropolitan area. If a long-distance passenger is willing to pay for additional comfort, there is not so much objection to it, but the time has arrived when there should be only one class in the trains in the metropolitan area. If the department wish to regain lost traffic, they should make a bid for it. They must give some incentive to people to use the trains. If people can get a charabanc or taxi at the street corner, they will not walk to a railway station and pay the same fare, or a little more. The Minister said it was nonsense to talk about reducing fares, seeing that the trains must run in the metropolitan area. If the Government can carry 200 people in a train instead of 20 or 30, even if the fares are reduced by one-fourth or one-third, it will pay the department to carry the larger number rather than run the trains nearly empty. The railways must provide an incentive to the people to use them, otherwise they will never regain the traffic they have lost. There is another matter that should cause concern to the authorities. During the past few weeks rolling stock has been held up owing to slackness of business. In the South Fremantle electorate, towards the Naval Base and along the sidings there, one can see hundreds of trucks piled up. That is not a fit place for rolling stock to be stored. It must be detrimental to it to be piled up there along the sea front. The exposure to sea air must affect the rolling stock; it should be looked after better than to be placed there and left for long periods.

Quite a lot of reconditioning may be required before the rolling stock can be used for the work for which it was intended. The state of the power house has been referred to in the report of the Commissioner. That is an important matter to Fremantle. Our tramway system and the whole of our lighting system are dependent upon the power house, and the water front would be at a standstill if the electric power should fail. It gives one great concern to read the report of the General Manager of the Tramways and Electricity Supply. On page 35 of the report, Mr. Taylor says that improved efficiency must be considered in getting the best out of the system. Capital is required. The improvements cannot be effected by retrenchment of staff and by allowing maintenance to go back. I take it that Mr. Taylor is complaining that, owing to funds being cut down, he has had to retrench his staff, and allow maintenance to go back. If maintenance is to be allowed to go back, it will be a serious matter for the metropolitan area. On page 43 he deals with the ash plant, and says that the fumes, which are very corrosive, are causing considerable damage to the steel structure. That is a very important matter. Any failure may cause the plant to be shut down until repaired, and a great deal of inconvenience thus caused. It would be a very serious thing for the portion of the metropolitan area I represent. Mr. Taylor goes on to say that if funds could be made available, it would be a good business proposition to instal a mechanical handling plant. Apparently this is causing him some concern as well. I hope something will be done to give a one-class system on the railways a trial in the metropolitan area. It would also be a serious thing if anything went wrong with the power station and the lights were cut off in the metropolitan area.

**MR. WANSBROUGH** (Albany) [12.4]: I wish to refer to the inconvenience caused to long-distance passengers travelling on the Great Southern railway, in the matter of refreshment room accommodation. I took up the matter with the department, but got no satisfaction. I hope the Albany line will be considered in this respect. A person who leaves Perth at 4 o'clock in the evening may have had his lunch at midday. The next sit-down meal he gets is at Mt.

Barker at 8 o'clock the next morning. It is true there are light refreshment rooms along the route, where one can get tea and scones, but the scones themselves are a disgrace to the department, and no one wants that sort of thing for a meal. With a slight alteration in the departure time from Perth to Albany, it would be possible to make Beverley a refreshment room, where a sit-down meal could be obtained. Time could be saved by cutting out the long stops at the small refreshment depots on the way. An alteration in the time of departure would be necessary at the Albany end in order that Beverley might be arrived at in the morning. This morning the passengers on the train had to go from Mt. Barker to Perth before they could get a sit-down meal. I appeal to the Minister to give consideration to this matter.

#### THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands—in reply) [12.5]: I have noted the main points raised by members, and will take an early opportunity to discuss them with the Commissioner of Railways. In most cases he is charged with the responsibility of having to perform certain functions. Sometimes the fact is lost sight of that by-laws under the Railway Act can only be made by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Commissioner. When they have been made they can only be repealed or amended on the recommendation of the Commissioner. Once by-laws are made the Commissioner is in actual control until he chooses to recommend an alteration. That is as it should be in a business concern of this magnitude. Naturally, the Government must take the responsibility for matters of policy. I will see how far we can go to meet the wishes of members. I ask them to accept my assurance that it is not the wish either of the Commissioner or the Government to be niggardly in maintaining the railway system, nor to be niggardly in the treatment of our staff, except from the standpoint of our being forced to do things through the financial stringency. Members have complained that possibly we are sailing close to the wind in the matter of maintaining our rolling stock, and in a lesser degree in the matter of maintaining our track. The Commissioner assures me he will take no risks with the track, and that he will, whenever required, recommend whatever is necessary to be done for the safety of the travelling public.

Mr. Wansbrough: He is running heavy engines now-a-days.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He is keeping his tracks in good order. We have a certificate from Mr. Cresswell that they are being kept in good order and repair. Within the last fortnight I asked the Commissioner if he considered the tracks were being maintained, and he assured me that he would not take any risks. I admit he is taking a risk in regard to the repairs to rolling stock, because the volume of goods to be moved has unfortunately fallen off, and he does not feel he is required to maintain quite the same amount of rolling stock as would be necessary if times were normal.

Mr. Wansbrough: That is where he has slipped.

The Minister for Railways: I admit that candidly; and I want to say, to the credit of the Commissioner, that it is not his wish even to do that. However, the financial position forces economy; we have not the money to enable him to do what was done formerly. To an extent he is forced to let things get into arrears. The time will come when we shall have to find the money to make up those arrears. The Commissioner and the Government are placed in an unfortunate position. When funds are available, we hope to put the men back in the Midland workshops to place the rolling-stock in order; but for some time to come funds will not be available. Many other points were mentioned in connection with the power station. I want the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) to accept my assurance that the Commissioner of Railways and the manager of the power house have been pressing the matter ever since we took office. I say candidly that it should have been taken up prior to our coming into office. There was delay in the matter so long ago as that. The point of greatest importance is not providing additional units to give sufficient output, but providing an additional stand-by. The station is made up of units of different sizes. There are three 4,000 kilowatt units, one 7,500 kilowatt, and one 12,500 kilowatt. If the 12,500 kilowatt unit breaks down, we are up against a stiff proposition. It requires the 12,500, plus the 7,500, to meet the peak load requirements. So that if the 12,500 unit broke down we would have to depend on the 7,500 and the three 4,000 units, and would probably have to lay off some of the system.

Mr. Sleeman: It is a case of not being able to do without the addition.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I readily admit that, but unfortunately the addition requires an expenditure of nearly £400,000, and therefore we cannot undertake it at this stage. The matter has not been lost sight of, and as soon as we get over our financial troubles funds will be provided. I know, and I say it now, well in advance, that criticisms will be hurled at all responsible for the delay which unquestionably will occur in meeting the demands upon the station when things again become normal. I suppose I shall have to carry my share, but the delay is not due to any lack of enthusiasm or any lack of demands on the part of the Commissioner or the manager, or for that matter myself, upon the Treasurer. The question raised by the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willecock) and the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) regarding the agreement existing between the Government and the Perth City Council respecting the price of electric current will, I am afraid, have to remain in abeyance a little longer. I have been tackling the subject for years, but have got no further than being told, "There is an agreement which is definite, and made for a definite period. You were unable to foresee the difficulties, and you ought not to ask us to pay for your lack of foresight."

Mr. Sleeman: You could get over that by legislation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but I doubt whether a majority could be got in both Houses. I do not think the Perth City Council have been fair in the matter at all. If they were not making a very handsome profit, in fact a huge profit, out of the transaction, I would not be the one to complain of their attitude. But considering that the current is supplied to them at less than the actual cost of production, I think that under the conditions of recent years they might have agreed to meet the Government in a readjustment of the price. The agreement is for a period of 50 years from the date of the agreement. When the agreement was made, it was made on a basis unquestionably fair between the two parties. Each of them was generating current, and one had to forego the right to generate if the other could generate cheaper than the two. The City Council agreed to forego the right provided they were supplied at .57d. No one

could foresee the possibility of increasing costs. Had coal remained at its then price, the cost of generating the current would have been approximately .54d. Unfortunately, however, there was a general increase of prices; and coal, instead of costing 12s. per ton, cost more than that for freight. The price of coal is now about 24s. per ton. That change has had a most serious effect, coal being the biggest factor in the cost of electric current. However, the Perth City Council were big producers of electricity, and had possibilities of tremendously increasing their output, and thus materially reducing their cost of production. We took away rights which were accruing to them, and which would have continued accruing until 1925. Thus there is something to be said for the Perth City Council. Still, taking into account the changed conditions, the City Council were not fair in not voluntarily offering to amend the agreement. It was admitted by my predecessor that they were wrong in not agreeing to an adjustment which would have been fair to both parties.

Mr. H. W. Mann: What is the use of an agreement if you are going to alter it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member interjecting has supported the Government in bursting agreements latterly as fast as it could be done. This agreement was quite a fair agreement when made, just the same as is an agreement made between a mortgagor and a mortgagee. Circumstances have so changed, however, that Parliamentary action is needed to adjust such an agreement. It may be said that the same thing applies to the agreement with the Perth City Council, but I do not suggest that that is wise. I say the City Council might have voluntarily agreed to discuss the matter in the light of the change in conditions since the agreement was made. Other matters which have been raised I will quite readily discuss with the Commissioner of Railways, and see how far it is possible to make the improvements which have been suggested. Whether they are practical or not, I cannot at the moment say.

Mr. Sampson: Has consideration been given to the electrification of any of the suburban railways?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—State Batteries, £37,487—agreed to.*

*Vote—Cave House (including Caves of the South-West, etc.), £7,200:*

**HON. S. W. MUNSIE** (Hannans) [12.21]: I realise that in these stressful times money should not be spent on pleasure resorts, but Cave House has been a paying proposition from the inception. For a considerable period each year the requirements of those who desired to go there could not be fully complied with. Unfortunately a fire destroyed portion of the buildings, and I am given to understand that the insurance money was paid over in respect of the damage caused by the fire. I am also informed that the insurance money has been expended in other directions. I admit that the estimate for the re-erection of up-to-date accommodation represented considerably more than the money received from the insurance company as the result of the fire. If those responsible for the control of Cave House had been able to secure the advantage of the insurance money, it would have been fairer to them, but the money has been spent elsewhere. It is not even in a fund, so that eventually Cave House might get it. That is not good business, and in my opinion represents a one-eyed policy. The money should have been spent in providing extra accommodation at Cave House, for I believe the expenditure would have returned more than the interest required. Other countries depend almost entirely upon the tourist traffic, and in this State little or nothing is done regarding our tourist resorts. I admit that something is done by the Tourist Bureau, but I think much more could be done to encourage not only the people in other parts of Australia and in foreign countries, but our own people, to spend their money in this State. As it is, many people are forced to go to the East because of lack of accommodation at Cave House. That is not the proper policy for the Government to adopt. I hope the Minister will give us an explanation of what has happened.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [12.24]: I support the member for Hannans. Too little regard is paid to the tourist traffic in this State. We do not take advantage of the natural opportunities that exist, and if we changed our attitude we might encourage the tourists of the world, who now pass by our shores, to remain here and enjoy the beauties of the caves in the South-West and our renowned karri country. It is of the

greatest importance that Cave House should be reconditioned as soon as possible. If Cave House were the property of a private individual or a private company, repairs would have been effected long ago. Unfortunately, it is a State concern, and is allowed therefore to remain in such a condition that the fullest advantage of the institution cannot be availed of by the public.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** Is it not controlled by the Licensing Bench?

**Mr. SAMPSON:** If it is, it is different from the other State hotels which, generally speaking, are allowed to do practically as they like. I do not desire to reflect upon the conduct of State hotels. They are usually well conducted, but the buildings are out of date. There are thousands of pounds awaiting expenditure in this State when we take full advantage of the various pleasure resorts that demand attention.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie:** It is unfair to the management of Cave House to carry on under existing conditions.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [12.27]: I am pleased that the member for Hannans recognises that this is not the time for spending money on extravagant buildings at pleasure resorts. It is true that £2,383 was received on account of the fire at Cave House, and of that amount £1,077 has been spent on some necessary improvements and temporary reconditioning of buildings, while £150 has yet to be spent. Plans have been prepared for a new building at a cost of £12,000, but it is totally impossible to do anything along those lines at present. Plans have been prepared from time to time, but always have been set aside.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie:** The plans have been absolutely extravagant ones.

**The MINISTER FOR LANDS:** Yes, but at the same time the accommodation has been totally inadequate. It has been pointed out that the accommodation provided was greater than for the corresponding period of last year.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie:** It will not be so next year.

**The MINISTER FOR LANDS:** We must not forget that there will not be the same amount of money for spending this year. But I do think we should cater for those who desire to make holiday in our own State. I assure the hon. member that whatever can be done to attract visitors to the

South-West will be done. It is very difficult to get money to spend on this class of building, but plans and estimates have been prepared for a new structure, and when the money is available the building will be erected.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Government Property Trust Account, £105,027 :*

**HON. A. McCALLUM** (South Fremantle) [12.32]: I thought we had the last of this Vote last year, that the Financial Agreement provided there should be no further dealings under this heading. These funds are raised by the sale of all kinds of Government property, mostly purchased from loan money, and when the property is sold the money goes into revenue. All Governments have done that. We have here an item of £40,000 to meet the decision of the High Court in the Ravensthorpe smelters' case. That money, in all probability, will come from the sale of some Government property purchased with loan money. It shows how unsound the system is. I notice in the Auditor General's report that after this year there will be no further sales of Government Property Trust Account, that the money will not be dealt with under this heading any more, that this is the balance of money from properties previously sold, and that this will exhaust the Vote. I am glad the end of it has come, for it is a very unsound system.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, it is unsound.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: We borrow money with which to buy materials or erect works of one or another sort, and then we sell it all and the money is taken into revenue. It is most unsound, but all Governments have done it year after year.

The Minister for Lands: And the same objection has been taken year after year.

**Hon. A. McCALLUM**: That is so, but it is brought home pretty forcibly this year with this 40,000 made available for legal costs, practically all loan money.

*Item—Ravensthorpe Smelter—Settlement of claims in accordance with High Court decisions, including law costs, £40,000 :*

**Hon. S. W. MUNSIE**: I should like to know whether the Minister is of opinion that a settlement can at last be made, even for the £40,000.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, this is final.

**Hon. S. W. MUNSIE**: I am glad to hear that. But this is about the eighth time the department has thought the case was finished with. On an earlier occasion £20,000 was paid in settlement, and according to this we are to pay another £40,000. I am very doubtful whether even this will bring a clean settlement. I hope the Minister is right in saying this is the final stage, but I have heard that so often. For years there was £21,000 in dispute, with the money lying at the Crown Law Department. The people who refused to accept the money appealed to the High Court against the allocation made by the department, but the court ruled that the allocation was correct. It has remained there for about five years and they have refused to take it. On top of that they appealed for interest on the money they had refused to accept and the court decided in their favour. Are the parties prepared to accept the settlement, and what are the terms of settlement? The argument has extended over about seven years.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The argument has extended over something like 15 years. When I reached a position to deal with the matter, I detailed an outside lawyer to settle it. I could not direct a Crown Law officer to do it, because there was no one with a knowledge of the question available. There was an outside lawyer who had the knowledge, and I instructed him to settle it. He has settled it, and the dispute is now settled definitely and for all time. If it had been settled 10 years ago, the State would have saved many thousands of pounds.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie**: I do not think the State was entitled to pay more than one-tenth of the money that has been paid.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That may be so. If the matter had been dealt with properly 10 or 15 years ago, the State would have got out of it at immensely less cost. Under the judgments of the High Court and Privy Council, there is not one penny of expenditure that in my opinion could have been escaped. I think the sum of money we are now paying is a fair compromise on the decisions of the courts.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie**: Is it going to cost the £40,000 to settle it?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

**Hon. S. W. Munsie**: That is at least £19,000 above the High Court judgment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is not.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: I say it is.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Then the hon. member does not know. He is merely expressing an opinion as to the particular High Court judgment that came under his notice. That was only one test case out of half a dozen or more cases. The sum on the Estimates, I repeat, is a fair and reasonable compromise in view of the legal position, which was defined by the judgment of the Privy Council. What has been done is final and conclusive, and it was just about time it was final and conclusive. I am prepared to support what has been done.

Mr. BROWN: I wish to refer to the bonus to farmers for wheat carting.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no item for it.

Mr. BROWN: Last year £7,155 was provided, but this year there is no amount.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no item and it cannot be discussed.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

## BILL—LOCAL COURTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

*House adjourned at 12.47 a.m.  
(Wednesday).*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 4th November, 1931.*

	PAGE
Questions: Farmers' Disabilities Commission ...	4993
Farm labour subsidy scheme ...	4993
Sleeper contract ...	4994
Wheat carting subsidy ...	4994
Hospital fund tax ...	4994
Assent to Bills ...	4994
Bills: Stamp Act Amendment (No. 4). 2R. ...	4994
Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust, 1R. ...	4997
Dried Fruits Act Continuance, Assembly's Message ...	4997
Land Tax and Income Tax (No. 2) ...	4997
Dividend Duties Act Amendment, 2R., Com. ...	5015
Vermine Act Amendment (No. 2) 2R. ...	5019

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

## QUESTION—FARMERS' DISABILITIES COMMISSION.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation to safeguard the farming industry on lines suggested by the Farmers' Disabilities Commission? 2, If so, will the Government give consideration to the scheme submitted by the Katanning Chamber of Commerce and Primary Producers' Association District Council to the commissioners, and recorded on page 41 of their report, as one best suited to meet the primary needs of the business and farming communities?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, No. It is considered that existing legislation affords reasonable protection. It must be remembered that the Commonwealth Bankruptcy Act overrides any State Act. 2, This plan was not endorsed by the Commission.

## QUESTION—FARM LABOUR SUBSIDY SCHEME.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: How many single men were placed with farmers under the farm labour subsidy scheme? 2, What percentage of the number so placed do the Unemployment Board estimate will be added to the unemployed list after the 14th November? 3, Are the Board aware that hundreds of farmers having statutory liens over the whole of their possessions will not be in a position to employ labour to take off their crops in the interest of their creditors if the scheme terminates on the 14th? 4, Will the Government reconsider their decision to terminate the farm labour subsidy scheme, and at least continue it to those farmers whose proceeds are under a lien, or who are not in a financial position to enable them to employ labour to take off their crops?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 2,632. 2, None, as we are advised that there is an improved demand for labour in country districts with the harvest approaching. 3, This is not within the knowledge of the Unemployment Board. 4, No. The scheme was introduced to provide subsidised farm labour to enable other than normal work on farms to be undertaken.