

Legislative Assembly, Friday, 26th November, 1909.

Questions: Miners' Wages, Anaconda	Page 1629
Railway Goods Shed, Beverley	1629
Bill: Land Act Amendment, Com.	1629
Annual Estimates, Votes and Items discussed	1638

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

QUESTION—MINERS' WAGES, ANACONDA.

Mr. BATH asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is he aware of the fact that the employees of the Anaconda Copper Mine have not been paid their wages, although verdicts for the amount were secured 12 months ago, and although at the time there was sufficient copper matte on the mine, if sold, to pay all wages. 2, Is the Minister aware that H. R. Coombes & Co., official liquidators, secured possession of this copper matte 12 months ago, and can he state why it has taken over 12 months to wind up affairs, thus depriving the workers of their wages?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Several liens for wages were registered in December, 1908, but at about the same time an order of the Supreme Court was made appointing a Provisional Liquidator and restraining all proceedings. 2, Presumably the official liquidator took possession of everything, but the department was advised in December, 1908, that all wages claims would be settled forthwith. I am now informed that the property has been sold, and arrangements made for the whole of the wages creditors to be paid in full within a few days. The liquidator advises that they would have been paid before had he received the sanction of the Court.

QUESTION—RAILWAY GOODS SHED, BEVERLEY.

Mr. W. PRICE asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Has the Railway Department recently erected a goods or storage shed at Beverley? 2, Was it constructed of new or second-hand material? 3, If

the latter, from where and whom was it procured, and what price was paid? 4, What has been the cost to the department of the removal, re-erection, and any alterations or renewals?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, A goods shed is now in course of erection. 2, Both new and second-hand material are being used. 3, The second-hand material consists of a shed at Wagin purchased from Messrs. Drew, Robinson & Co., for £200. 4, Costs are not yet available.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Daglish in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 11—Amendment of 6 Edward VII., No. 29, S. 24. (An amendment had been moved by Mr. Bath in Subclause 2 to insert in line 3 the word "each" before "one.") :

Mr. BATH: The amendment had been moved on the previous day with the object of assisting the Minister to carry out the desire he had expressed to the Committee. But as it had since transpired that the amendment would be entirely foreign to the clause, there would be no need for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was certainly no need for the amendment. The present Act on the question of the resident conditions was vague, and it was possible that if 10 persons were to select 20,000 acres only one could reside on that area. It was desired to make it clear that that should not be allowed.

Mr. Collier: Do you want one to live on every thousand acres?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Certainly. There was no desire to give people an advantage that was not given to each individual. If five people selected separately they could each have 2,000 acres. If they selected together under the present law they could have 10,000 acres, and one of the five had to reside on the area. It was desired now to alter that state of affairs in order that these part-

ners should not have an advantage over a single individual.

Mr. Butcher: You are going to make the five live on the land.

The Premier: Yes, if they take it under residential conditions.

Mr. Underwood: They should not be allowed to take any without residence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was hoped that the clause would go through as it was printed. Hon. members could rest assured that it was a well guarded clause.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The clause, as printed, would not receive his support, although he entirely endorsed the object the Minister had in view. If the clause were worded to express more clearly what the Minister had indicated he (Mr. Underwood) would be one of its strongest supporters. He disagreed with the proposal that we should enact conditions which would permit dummying. In other sections of the Act it was possible for dummying to be carried out. People could dummy under non-residential conditions, and it was no use adding another proposal to enable them to do so. The land of Western Australia should be sold to people who were going to use it. This had been his view in connection, not only with agricultural, but with mining lands. Several supposed arguments had been advanced by the members for Kalgoorlie and Kanowna, and one was that at least 1,000 acres of first class land was necessary for a man to get a living on. That view he entirely disagreed with. Under proper farming methods any man could get a really good living off 500 acres. Further than that, no one man could properly farm more than 500 acres. The trouble was that many men selected too much land. A great deal of the disaster which had befallen selectors had been due to the fact that they had taken up too much land. All over the State men were to be seen struggling with areas far beyond their capacity. Probably the Minister would agree to this proposition.

The Minister for Lands: I do.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: With 500 acres these people would have no difficulty at all and would make a comfortable living.

It had been suggested that under this provision he (Mr. Underwood) would not be able to hold his land. As a matter of fact, it would be in the interests of the State if he were not able to hold his land. Of the 100 civil servants who had applied for land, about 40 had been unable to obtain it, whilst he had a block of first-class land within four or five miles of the railway, and that, too, without having to reside upon it. That was not fair. Those who wanted to go on the land should be able to go on the land he was holding without using. Still, if the St. George's-terrace farmers, such as Glowrey, James, and Lovekin, were to be allowed to hold land without using it, why should not he be allowed to do the same?

The CHAIRMAN: I hardly think the hon. member comes under this clause.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It was well enough to say that if selectors took up land under non-residence conditions they would have 50 per cent. more improvements to make, but any healthy man could go on the land and make improvements to his own 1,000 acres and to the 1,000 acres of another. As a matter of fact, the improvements were infinitesimal.

The Premier: They can be done for £125.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Any man who could not earn £125 under the prices allowed by the department would be of no use at all on the land. There would be no difficulty about two men taking 2,000 acres of land, 1,000 being residential and 1,000 non-residential, and one man of the two could fulfil the conditions of both blocks, which, notwithstanding what the member for Kanowna had previously said, would constitute a joint holding under different sections of the Act. The trouble was that the clause did not make it clear that the selector would have to reside on his land. As far as possible the wording of the corresponding section of the Mines Act should be adopted for the clause.

The PREMIER: It would be easy for one man to comply with the conditions without doing anything extraordinary. For instance, a man might take 1,000 acres at 10s. under residence conditions;

he would have to spend 1s. per acre, or £50. If he took up another 1,000 acres under non-residence conditions he would have to spend on that, £50, plus £25; that was to say, he would spend £50 on the one block and £75 on the other, or a total of £125. Thus it would be seen it would not be a hard tax upon him to comply with the conditions. The object of the Bill was to more clearly define the maximum area that might be held by one selector. The Minister for Lands had pointed out that it might be possible for a syndicate of 10 to be formed to take up 10 conditional purchase blocks under residential conditions, and that one of the persons would carry out the conditions. As a matter of fact, by an office regulation, no persons had been allowed to take up more than 2,000 acres under a joint holding of this kind, so it would be seen that the system had not been abused.

Mr. WALKER: If joint holders—not partners—were to take up 2,000 acres one man would be allowed to occupy it to the extent of 1,000 acres, while the other joint owner had the other 1,000 acres held under different conditions. Clearly that was an anomaly. Joint ownership, as distinct from partnership, implied that both held equally.

The Premier: Why cannot the partners take up one block under residence conditions and one partner comply with the conditions?

Mr. WALKER: Because in cases where land was granted in the joint names of two persons the joint ownership was really one name; that was to say, it was one block under one set of conditions registered in two names, which became for all the purposes of ownership one name only. He objected to the wording of the clause. If they were joint owners no distinction could be made between them, for the meaning of joint tenancy was that each owner was looked upon as the owner. Joint ownership had a different meaning to partnership or tenancy in common, and if a grant was issued under joint ownership each owner would hold the whole. The interest was absolutely undivided. In pointing this out he was not arguing for dummying.

Dummying would go on no matter how things were fixed. The rich man could get proxies to take up the land, and would ultimately get the blocks transferred to himself. The desire was to get the wording altered. His suggestion was that in the case of joint ownership the residence by one owner with additional improvement conditions would get over the difficulty. He had no objection to the provision, but it was an anomaly to talk of two sets of holdings in one holding. The lease issued was only one piece of land, except that it was issued in two names. However, the matter might not go into Court, but if it did difficulties would arise in connection with the joint tenancy.

Mr. BATH: The amendment did not suit him, but if the Minister would promise to see if better drafting could be devised to more clearly express the meaning, the amendment would be withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The desire was that the section should do the work intended. He would consult the Parliamentary Draftsman, and if there was the slightest doubt about the provision, would recommit the Bill. He wanted this amendment to the principal Act in order to prevent the selection of greater areas than people were entitled to without residence.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 and 13—agreed to.

Clause 14—Amendment of 6 Edward VII., No. 29, Section 75:

Mr. BATH: In the amending Act of 1906 it was provided that a caveat should be lodged at a place in Perth, but there was to be an additional address given at the bottom of the document. Why was it now desired to do away with this provision for the additional address on the document?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Parliamentary Draftsman thought the amendment necessary, but seeing caveats were dealt with in the Transfer of Land Act Amendment Bill introduced in the Council this clause was now unnecessary.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 15—Repayment of expenditure from loan funds by consolidated revenue:

Mr. BATH: What power in the principal Act gave the Minister the right to use loan moneys for the purchase or acquisition of land for selection, because the only provision for this purpose was in the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act?

Mr. Underwood: Oh, that does not matter; it will do no harm.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Section 5 of the principal Act gave power to purchase, and that section was amended by Section 3 of the Act of 1906. Of course the money had first to be provided by Parliament. Under the vote for "Development of Agriculture" Parliament had already provided the money, and this was utilised in the purchase of small blocks that were taken up as water sites in the old days. Under the terms of land selection in the past it was possible for a lessee to secure all the water-holes that could be got, and in resuming the leases it was found that the water holes were held by the lessee in fee simple. The object of Section 5 of the principal Act was to enable the Government to secure these blocks. At any rate the purchases by the Government were limited to small blocks of that description. We not only purchased the blocks but sold them to the selectors of the adjacent Crown lands, requiring them to pay the purchase price. The money was obtained from loan under the head of "Development of Agriculture."

Clause put and passed.

Clause 16—agreed to.

Clause 17—Special improvement conditions:

Mr. JACOBY: The clause gave the Minister power to make special conditions of improvement on land situated within a certain distance of a railway, either proposed to be constructed or being constructed. That imposed an extra burden on the new settlers, and he failed to see why those persons should have to pay all the cost, whereas those who took up land prior to the line being proposed were exempt. The clause should be drafted in

a form more equitable than at present. He moved an amendment—

That in line 2 the words "Crown land open for selection" be struck out, and "land" inserted in lieu.

The PREMIER: Would not a clause like that interfere with an existing contract? If the amendment were carried, the provision could not be enforced.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was desired that the clause should be of some use. It was the policy of the country to build railways wherever justified. Of the one hundred million acres in the south-west corner of the State there were still 84 million acres belonging to the Crown. It was easy to see, therefore, that we could build lines through land not alienated. All he asked was that he might be given power to prescribe by regulation for special improvements over the area to be served by the railways. The older settlers would have no advantage over the newer settlers. They selected the land probably before there was any idea of a railway, and they fulfilled their contract with the Government as to improvement conditions. When the new selector went out he knew that a railway would be built near his block, and bought the land plus the facilities, and paid little if any more than the man who took up the land without the guarantee of the facilities. The Government were providing railways, roads, water supplies, and harbour facilities for the export trade, and all these things made the land more valuable for the selector. Therefore it was only reasonable that certain special improvement conditions should be prescribed. The conditions would not go beyond the amount of the advance of the Agricultural Bank. It was reasonable that if the bank cared to advance say £500, one should require a man to spend it at the rate of £125 per annum. No great hardship would be inflicted by asking a selector along a railway line to have at least one man working continuously on his holding of 640 acres.

Mr. BUTCHER: The clause was not a fair one, for it was going to inflict a great hardship on the new settler. He had in his mind's eye settlers who had taken

up land on the present Narrogin-Wickepin line and had established themselves there. It was not unlikely that the Government would extend that line, and then settlers still further away from a market were to suffer additional penalties.

Mr. BATH: The men with freehold will not be touched.

Mr. BUTCHER: The best thing to do would be to strike the clause out.

Mr. BATH: If the amendment could be enforced it would be a vast improvement on the clause as it stood. If we were to apply the provision to all lands along the railway without discrimination it would be very desirable, but under the clause the provision would only apply to settlers who took up land after the railway was constructed. It was desirable that persons whose land ran along the railway line should use that land, but it was not fair to make only the new settler suffer these disabilities. The policy of a settler on a newly taken up holding was a progressive one. If he desired to develop his property, the longer he continued the more he was in a position to cultivate it, carry out improvements, and grow products which would be carried on the railway. The clause as printed meant that so long as a man had land along a railway before the line was projected, he would not be touched. The clause in any case could not be applied to the holder of freehold, and it frequently happened that those persons held large areas of land along the lines. They would escape free, while their land would be greatly enhanced by the construction of the railway.

Mr. WALKER: They will be touched by the land tax assessment.

Mr. BATH: The hardship the clause would inflict outweighed the advantages it would secure. If we wished this principle to be applied it would be best to apply it by a betterment tax.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The clause should be struck out. The man furthest out would under the clause suffer the worst conditions. The man who got there first was in a much better position, for he had not so far to carry his

stuff, and he did not have to put improvements on the land. If the clause were to make everyone improve the land he would be strongly in favour of it, but it was not advisable to put excessive conditions solely on the new man. Were it not for the fact that it could not be applied, he would have supported the amendment. The best thing, however, would be to strike out the clause. Many of those who first went on the land, and had received so much benefit from the unearned increment had made no improvements whatever to their property.

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

Ayes	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	27

Majority against .. 14

AYES.

Mr. Bath	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Holman	Mr. Swan
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Ware
Mr. McDowall	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. O'Loughlin	Mr. Heilmann
Mr. W. Price	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Horan
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Male
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Monger
Mr. Carson	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Collier	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. J. Price
Mr. George	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gill	Mr. Walker
Mr. Gregory	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Hayward	(Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. FOULKES: It was his intention to move an amendment to add certain words at the end of the clause.

Mr. SCADDAN: Before the hon. member submitted that amendment the Minister might explain what he meant by the words "a proposed railway."

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not discuss that part of the clause unless he had an amendment to move.

Mr. Scaddan: This procedure had always been adopted.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Claremont was in order in moving an amendment, but the member for Ivanhoe could not speak unless he moved an amendment prior to the one the member for Claremont desired to move.

Mr. Scaddan: With all due respect he would submit—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could appeal against the ruling if he liked, but he could not discuss the clause unless he moved an amendment.

Mr. SCADDAN: In order to discuss the clause, therefore, he would move an amendment—

That in line 4 the words "a proposed" be struck out.

His desire was to know what the Minister meant by the words "a proposed railway." It might be proposed to run a line of railway in the vicinity of a settler's property; that same settler, however, might be some 50 miles away from the existing railway. Why should we compel him to make additional improvements because of a line which was proposed and might never be constructed, while in another district a person was exempt from these conditions.

The Premier: You could substitute "authorised" for "proposed."

Mr. SCADDAN: That would meet the objection, and with the permission of the House he would alter his amendment accordingly.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was no objection to the amendment. It was never intended that the railway should be other than a railway authorised by Parliament.

Mr. JACOBY: Although the intention of the Minister was a good one it showed how difficult it was when he attempted to apply it in detail. Unless we brought in legislation and made the clause applicable all round we would never reach a satisfactory position. In one part of the Bill the Committee had already agreed, in order to help the settler, that certain payments should be deferred. It was recognised that it was necessary that special consideration should be given to a settler when he started. In the clause under discussion, however, it was proposed to over-

load the new settler, whereas the man who had been settled for some time would be working his block, having had the opportunity of effecting improvements on the property more than to meet requirements, would escape scot free. The man who had held land and had not improved it also escaped. It was his (Mr. Jacoby's) intention to vote against the clause. As far as the amendment moved by the member for Ivanhoe was concerned, it would lead to a lot of agitation as to the direction that the proposed line should follow. The matter would be before the public for a long time, ultimately Bills would be brought down, and it would take two or three months before they were passed, and it would not be until the line was actually authorised that these conditions could be put into force. It would have the effect of increasing the value of the land to the extent of £2 an acre, and the established settlers were to pay nothing for it, but the settler who was just starting would have to bear the extra burden of these regulations.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. FOULKES moved an amendment—

That the following words be added to the clause:—"But the holder of such land shall not be required to carry out any improvements which exceed the amount which the Agricultural Bank is prepared to lend such holder."

His reasons were to compel those people who took up land to improve their holdings up to the amount the Agricultural Bank was prepared to advance. No one could say that it would impose a hardship upon the holder. It would be an advantage to the holder himself to be compelled to improve his land as rapidly as possible.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It had not been his intention to make improvement conditions beyond the amount which would be advanced by the Agricultural Bank. He was prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr. WALKER: With or without the amendment the clause was not acceptable. It would be placing a special burden on the new-comer. The clause would not compel the bank to lend money.

The Minister for Lands: It would compel the man to spend it when the bank lends it.

Mr. WALKER: Under our law as it stood no man could hold his land except he did improve it. What more could be required? Were we to run a man's holding for him and tell him how much was to be ringbarked and how much cleared and sown? No one set of conditions could be framed which would apply to the varying grades of land to be found, sometimes within one small area. It was superfluous to urge bona fide settlers to get ahead with their improvements, because they would be only too eager to go ahead. The Agricultural Bank would have to be stimulated to lend money to these newcomers, for a ridiculous situation would be set up if the settlers found themselves in the position to say that they could not comply with the Minister's demands for the reason that the bank would not lend them the money.

The PREMIER: At present the conditions had to be complied with in 10 years. The Minister might choose to insist upon the conditions being complied with in three years in order that the land should be made reproductive and provide traffic for the railway.

Mr. WALKER: We would have to be careful that we did not put too much on the new settlers and leave the older settlers without any conditions to be complied with. To do this would be to sow a crop of failures, and enable those with capital to buy up such failures.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: How would the amendment affect a man who did not require to go to the bank at all—the man who had sufficient money to make his own improvements? Again, if a man did not require to go to the bank would it be necessary for him to pay the expenses of the bank inspector who would go over the property with the view to determining how much the bank would lend on it in the event of the holder wanting a loan?

The Premier: The same principle will be adopted as at present. The amount the bank will advance will be stated on the block.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Suppose the bank would not lend any money, would the holder of the land not then be required to make improvements? Again, how would it be possible to insist upon the bank lending money, seeing that we had been told that the bank had no money to lend.

Mr. SCADDAN: After all, some consideration was being given to the new settler which the older settlers did not have, for in the preceding clause it was provided that for the first three years only half their rates would have to be paid. It would mean a considerable saving to the new settlers. Clearly we had been selling our land too cheaply, and he was pleased to see that the Government were beginning to recognise that fact. The proviso moved by the member for Claremont would only apply in cases where the Minister made special conditions over and above those laid down in the existing Act. The Agricultural Bank would become the all powerful institution in the country, and the fact that the Land Act said certain conditions should be carried out would be nothing. The bank would say what improvements should be made. But lands which would not come under the regulations prescribed by the Minister would not come under the proviso. The clause provided that additional conditions to those prescribed in the Act could be imposed, and the effect would be that on holdings which would come under the Agricultural Bank the Minister could compel the holders to carry out improvements to the extent prescribed by the Agricultural Bank if the proviso were agreed to. Then if a man had not the money with which to carry out the improvements he could go the bank and get it because the bank was practically pledged to advance the money. It would be a good thing to have these people compelled to fulfil these conditions prescribed by the bank, because the conditions prescribed by the Act could be fulfilled by any man in a month in each year. We should agree to the amendment proposed by the member for Claremont.

Mr. KEENAN: The argument that Clause 16 conferred special benefits on

new settlers was not sufficient to justify Clause 17. Clause 16 would apply to all who took up land whose term had not been running for any considerable period. However, it could not be taken for granted that the effect of Clause 17 was to give the Minister power to add to the conditions prescribed by the principal Act. It went further than that; because it gave the Minister power to substitute other conditions, or to reduce the original conditions to nothing.

Mr. Scaddan: The hon. member is discussing the clause and not the amendment.

Mr. KEENAN: It was always understood that in the course of debates the clause was put as a whole though an amendment might be moved.

The CHAIRMAN: The question was really the words proposed to be added. Later on the hon. member would have an opportunity of discussing the clause as amended or in its present form.

Mr. KEENAN: If an amendment were moved to strike out one word would the debate have to be confined to the discussion of that word?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could discuss the effect of adding the words proposed to be added to the clause. Later on he would have an opportunity of debating the clause with or without the addition of those words.

Mr. FOULKES: The member for Pilbara claimed the bank would have the power to decide whether improvements could be carried out or not. That was not altogether the position. All the bank would be called upon to give evidence of would be as to whether they would give the advance or not. The Minister would prescribe the improvements to be carried out, and then an inspector would see whether the holders were carrying out the improvements. If the inspector found the improvements were not being carried out the holder could say he was quite willing to carry them out, but the bank would not lend the money. It was quite right the bank should be a check upon the regulations the Minister might make. There might be a Minister in-office holding strong views as to what improvements should be effected, and

the settler might not be able to carry them out, but under the proviso suggested the holder of the land could come forward and say he was prepared to carry them out if he could obtain the money from the Agricultural Bank, and if he could not get that money he should not be required to carry out the improvements.

Mr. UNDERWOOD understood that the Minister could only prescribe improvements up to the amount the bank would lend. Therefore, until the bank decided what it would lend the Minister could not prescribe the improvements.

The Premier: The conditions will apply whether the bank lends the money or not.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That was an extraordinary position. The Minister prescribed regulations, and then asked the bank whether they were correct. The bank might say "no." Then the Minister would turn round and tell the settler he need not effect the improvements; but in the meantime the settler might have carried out the improvements in obedience to the Minister's regulations.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was desired to apply special improvement conditions to areas such as the surveyed land eastward of Dowerin. There the blocks had been inspected by the Agricultural Bank, and there was a form provided showing what the bank would advance on any particular block. It was desired that anyone taking up a block so marked must carry out the improvement conditions to the amount the bank would be prepared to advance on the block, and this would lead to the speedy improvement of the land. Under the original Act a man could take 10 years to carry out improvements to the extent of £500. When we built lines through virgin country we wanted to have the land opened up and improved as speedily as possible to make the railways pay.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is discussing the clause and not the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was desirable to have conditions to compel the selector to spend in improve-

ments at least the amount the Agricultural Bank was willing to lend on the block. The limitation that would be given by the amount the bank was prepared to advance would be a safeguard to the selector.

Mr. Underwood: If there is no application made to the bank for a loan what takes place.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Any selector fortunate enough to have sufficient money to effect the improvements without going to the bank for an advance would still have to effect improvements equal to the amount the bank was willing to advance on the block. The bank inspector made a valuation of each block and put against the block the amount the bank was willing to lend. Then regulations were desired to compel the occupant to expend in four years the amount the bank was willing to advance on the block, and that would be much better in the interests of the country than to have the land developed by the existing improvement conditions of 10 years.

(Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.)

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. BATH: The Committee could not do better than reject the clause. The object the Minister had in view was to secure the cultivation of the land along railway lines to be constructed. That was a good object, but the method was entirely wrong, for it would involve discrimination and hardship to some, while others who should be dealt with would not be affected. The provision should be made to apply all round.

Mr. GILL: The clause should be rejected. The idea of the Minister was a good one, but the method was wrong. The proposition would simply penalise a new settler. Those who had been established on the land for some years should also be dealt with, for the result would be a benefit to the State as a whole. The present conditions of improvement were fairly substantial provided they were carried out, and they should bring 10 per

cent of the land under cultivation if there were proper administration. It was not wise to leave the discretion in the hands of the Minister who would be guided by his officers, for it was possible that, in such circumstances, mistakes would be made. All desired the land to be brought under cultivation.

The Minister for Lands: Why not assist the Government to do it?

Mr. GILL: That result would not be brought about by the passage of the clause.

Mr. JACOBY: The intention of the Minister originally was to insist upon a certain amount of cultivation. He had said that if 10 per cent. of the land within 15 miles radius of a railway were cultivated the product would be sufficient to make the railway pay. He also had said he thought that before building any more lines there should be a provision whereby the people of the district to be served by the railway should cultivate 10 per cent. of their lands. That proposal he (Mr. Jacoby) warmly supported, but now the question was entirely different. It was doubtful whether in any of the districts to be served in future by agricultural railway lines there was not already a good deal of land alienated. Those who originally took up the land had naturally picked out the eyes of the country. Now we were going to put the burden on those who settled later. It was not right to ask them to take a burden not shared in by the more fortunate settlers of the district. The Minister in the course of a speech made somewhere between Quairading and Kellerberrin some time ago referred to this matter and practically told the people of the district that if they were prepared to agree to a proposition that at least 10 per cent. of the land within a 15 miles radius of a railway were cultivated each year, the Government would have no hesitation in building the line. All who heard the Minister readily consented to the proposition. In that district the whole of the land with the exception of the sand plains had been selected. The people were perfectly willing to such a condition being imposed so

that it could be readily understood that people in any district where a railway was required would be only too glad to assent to the proposition. The present suggestion, however, was inequitable. If we were going to adopt the betterment principle, let it apply to the whole of the State. He had always been in favour of that principle, but did not agree to a detail of it being tacked on to this Bill. He intended to oppose the clause.

Mr. SCADDAN: There was a good deal in the argument of the member for Swan that the principle should apply to all lands whether selected or not, but was it desirable that we should compel persons who had the advantage of existing lines, and those intended to be constructed, to do something more in the direction of bringing the land into cultivation than was to be done by those who had selected in the past. The amount of land under cultivation was not increasing in proportion to the quantity being disposed of. While the effect might be serious on new settlers as compared with old settlers, still if that argument was applied to everything there would be no improvement to the laws. If the principle were good, apply it is early as possible. There was nothing to prevent the clause passing now, for if the betterment principle became law later on it could be repealed. For the time being the Government were doing well to compel those who held land to bring it under cultivation.

Clause, as amended, put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	18
			—
Majority for	..	..	2

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Carson	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Davies	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. J. Price
Mr. George	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gregory	Mr. F. Willson
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Hayward	(Teller).
Mr. Male	

NOES.

Mr. Bath	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Bolton	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Swan
Mr. Collier	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gill	Mr. Walker
Mr. Holman	Mr. Ware
Mr. Horan	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. Heltmann
Mr. Johnson	(Teller).
Mr. McDowall	

Clause, as amended, thus passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1909-10.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 23rd November; Mr. Daglish in the Chair.

Works Department (Hon. F. Willson, Minister).

Vote—*Public Works and Buildings*, £129,428:

Item, Maintenance of Road, Caves, £500:

Mr. SCADDAN: When a thing was not good it was just as well to knock it out at once. He moved—

That the item be struck out.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: This was not a new item, it had been on the Estimates ever since the road had been made.

Mr. Scaddan: Why is it not down in last year's Estimates?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It appeared last year under main roads, and it would be found on page 43 of the Estimates: £400 was voted for the Busselton-Yallingup road, and £200 for the Yallingup-Lake road. The liability left from last year ran into £300, and members should know that the roads in that part of the State had been made specially to open up the caves district. They extended from Busselton to Yallingup 20 miles, and that was the main road, and then on to the Margaret River another 20 miles, and from there seven or eight miles to the Lake caves. Many years ago Parliament decided in its wisdom to spend many thousands of pounds in opening up the caves in Western Australia, and anyone who had visited the district would say that the work had been well done, and

that that portion of the State was well worthy of a visit. Visitors to the number of between 2,000 and 3,000 had proceeded to the caves during last year, to say nothing of the number of people who went there from the neighbouring districts. Last January alone 482 visited the caves, and it was hoped that the number would go on increasing. The road had been constructed at considerable expense and had to be maintained. If the roads board had to maintain these roads then, of course, special consideration would have to be shown to these bodies.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If the member for Ivanhoe did not persevere with his amendment he should, at least, move for a reduction in the item. When we allocated a large sum of money to construct roads it was only a fair thing to ask the local bodies to take some share of the burden of maintenance. If the local bodies were to do this they could relieve the Government of the upkeep of these roads. A question which would have to engage the attention of the Government shortly was the necessity to amalgamate these bodies in that district. Within a few miles of Busselton there was one roads board which had not justified its existence; he referred to Capel. He would oppose the item, because the time had arrived when the local bodies should take on the maintenance of these thoroughfares. An effort had been made by him to secure a paltry few pounds for new roads in his electorate for the settlers, but he had been unable to get anything. It was not in that spirit, however, that he supported the amendment. Ministers had been asked for railway facilities in this district, and the remarkable feature was that they had not sufficient foresight to see whether a district warranted these facilities being granted. It was often possible to construct a railway in the place of expending large sums of money on roads. It meant in this case that we would go on expending this sum of money every year, and in three or four years time the Government would have sufficient reports, which would be considered as a justification for the construction of a railway, and this railway would be built parallel with the road. The

sooner we ceased voting grants for roads in that district the better. If the district warranted the construction of a railway the question should be taken into consideration.

Mr. W. PRICE: It was inconceivable how a Ministry continually bragging of economy could ask the Committee to vote £500 for an ornamental road whilst they denied facilities to settlers throughout the country. Where the primary producers were concerned the Ministry were to be found advocating rigid economy, notwithstanding which they asked for this large vote for a road to the caves. Whoever went to the caves?

The Minister for Works: I do not think the hon. member can have been there.

Mr. W. PRICE: Unfortunately, no; for he was not one of the toffs who were able to sail about in motor cars. He had his work to attend to, and he could not find time to go around with picnic parties to the caves. From the report of the caves board it seemed that the State had derived £400 19s. 9d. as a result of the caves, in return for which the Committee was asked to vote £500. He hoped that hon. members would show their sincerity in regard to economising by striking out this unnecessary item. The Minister had said that £300 of the money was already spent.

The Minister for Works: A balance from last year.

Mr. W. PRICE: There were other balances which had not been expended. He knew of a case of £1,000 voted for new roads for settlers, of which only £14 had been spent.

The Minister for Works: To which item is the hon. member referring?

Mr. W. PRICE: To the Denmark roads vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not discuss the Denmark roads vote.

Mr. W. PRICE: A sum of £500 expended on a road through producing areas would be of much greater benefit to the State.

Mr. JOHNSON: For the reason that it seemed to him unfair to be expending this money on a road which had been constructed out of public revenue he would

support the striking out of the item. He had been to the caves, paying his fare each way, and in consequence of what he had seen he could say the road was thoroughly well constructed. For a considerable part of the distance along the road the land was alienated, and as a result, the roads board was deriving rates therefrom. That being so, it was only fair that the roads board should be called upon to maintain this road which had been constructed out of public funds. In the report of the roads and bridges branch of the Public Works Department special attention had been drawn to this road, showing that it had received special attention from the department during the year. If it were contended that the funds of the board would not permit of its maintaining the road, it could be retorted that the board had power to increase its rate with the view to increasing its income, which appeared to be so small that the board contributed less than £45 for every £100 received in the way of special grants from the Government. On the broad question of whether we were justified in continuing the maintenance of main roads after they had been constructed out of public funds, it should be mentioned that the year before last an assurance had been given by the Government that the item would be reduced. That promise was not honoured, and last year, again, a similar promise had been given.

The Honorary Minister: Quote the promise from *Hansard*.

Mr. JOHNSON: *Hansard* was seldom read by him, for the reason that he knew that *Hansard* was revised.

The Honorary Minister: You know you cannot revise a promise out of it.

Mr. JOHNSON: For his part he never revised his speeches at all; he let them go for what they were worth. He was happy to say that they were touched up a great deal by the *Hansard* staff; a process rendered necessary by reason of bad grammar and other faults. He did not revise his speeches, but he had heard other speeches made in the House, and when he had desired to quote them and had looked for them in *Hansard* they were not to be found. However, on the occasion to which he had referred he had been

present, had taken part in the debate, and had heard the promise given that the item would be reduced. As a matter of fact, the promise had been given, not on account of a protest from the Opposition side of the House, but because when the Hon. F. H. Piesse had taken up the cudgels on behalf of those advocating the removal of the maintenance of main road vote, the Government had realised that they would have to give some such promise. Consequently they had given a promise that the next year they would reduce the vote, if they did not actually cut it out.

The Honorary Minister: When was that?

Mr. JOHNSON: The year before last, and last year a promise was distinctly given that the Government would reduce the vote by one-third this year. That promise was not fulfilled. The Minister had admitted it had not been carried out to the fullest extent.

The Minister for Works: It has been.

Mr. JOHNSON: It would be necessary to debate some of these items to see if that was the case. Time after time members raised protests against the continuation of these maintenance votes, and those opposed to these maintenance votes must strike out this item because it was something new. It was not provided for in the maintenance vote previously.

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. JOHNSON: On the general principle he protested. In the existing condition of the finances we could not continue the maintenance of these main roads; but if we permitted the expenditure, was it to be said these main roads were only to be found in the Sussex district, and round the metropolitan area? There were main roads in every constituency of equal importance to this road, with the difference that it was almost a certainty the local authorities contributed largely towards the construction of those roads. Of course it would be a sound position, though not financially unless we increased taxation, to recognise the responsibility for maintaining all main roads; but if we went that far, why should we maintain some roads and

neglect others ? The Government should not be allowed to single out special roads for special construction. The Sussex roads board drew revenue from the land on either side of the road, but contributed nothing towards the maintenance, and it was the duty of Parliament to call upon the board to maintain the road. If the present revenue of the board was not sufficient it should tax to the fullest extent empowered under the Act, and would have ample funds with which to do it. He had visited the caves, and was more than pleased with what he saw, yet he was convinced the Government should not be called upon to maintain the Caves road ; it was the duty of the roads board in the locality to do it.

The HONORARY MINISTER : When the promise was given that the maintenance vote would be reduced by 30 per cent. in this year's Estimates, the item for the Caves road was not included among those items around which the discussion ranged. The promise did not refer to the Caves road. There were on the Estimates year after year roads to which casual assistance was given which did not come under the heading of main roads, as they were not so obviously main roads such as the Claremont-Subiaco, and Perth-Armadale roads. It was well understood last year that the promise was given that there should be a reduction of the grants to local authorities towards the cost of the upkeep of certain of the main roads in the State. For these roads a certain proportion of the maintenance was paid by the Government and certain by the local authorities ; but that was not the case with the Caves road, all the money for the maintenance of which for many years past had been wholly paid by the Government. *Hansard* failed to show any reference to this road during last year's discussion on the maintenance vote. Members should look on this matter from a purely business point of view. The present Government had nothing to do with the building of the road. It was built at a cost of about £20,000. and the question was whether it was not advisable, sooner than see the whole thing going to rack and ruin, for the Government to give this assistance. The

suggestion of the member for Guildford was to throw the whole responsibility for the maintenance of the road upon the Sussex roads board ; but that roads board with its unimproved value of £31,200, by rating at a maximum of 2½d. in the pound could only realise £325 ; and as it had other roads to maintain, it would be impossible to cast the responsibility on to them. It was understood the Caves were increasing in popularity, and with an increase in population there was no reason why they should not be largely visited. By striking out the grant we would have the road going to destruction. He would not have been one to incur a capital expenditure of £20,000 for that road ; it was a great mistake he thought ; but we had the road, and any Government in power would see the absolute need in the best interests of the State of keeping it up.

Mr. ANGWIN : It was hard to understand the Honorary Minister's attitude in saying that he would not have been one to incur the expenditure on this road. Last year the Honorary Minister had sold those who were in favour of having expenditure on main roads.

The Honorary Minister : On a point of order, I as a rule leave myself in the hands of the Chair as to unfair criticisms or remarks, but I draw your attention to the statements made.

The CHAIRMAN : The remarks of the hon. member were capable of two interpretations, and he should withdraw it so that there would be no doubt.

Mr. ANGWIN withdrew. He had visited the Caves and came to the conclusion that the money spent in the construction of the road there would have been better spent in the construction of a railway. However a large amount of money was spent in the original construction, and it was necessary therefore that a certain sum should be provided for maintenance. Throughout the world main roads were maintained, not by the immediate local authorities but by the people as a whole. It was the duty cast upon the people to maintain all main roads. In the circumstances, therefore, he intended to vote for the retention of the item,

but he hoped the Government would take into consideration the possibility of reducing the maintenance of this road by running a railway to the district.

Mr. SCADDAN: Last year the item did not appear as a main road, but as a special grant. Unless the Committee took action, it would now appear every year among the main roads. This huge sum should not be paid for maintenance of a road which was originally constructed at great cost by the Government, and which the local authorities should now keep up. It was said last year that the main road votes would disappear by instalments, but the one in question had not been reduced by 30 per cent.

The Minister for Works: It had been reduced by 60 per cent. over last year, as £300 of the sum now on the Estimates was spent last year.

Mr. SCADDAN: If the Minister would give an assurance that next year there would be a 30 per cent. reduction, not on the £500 but on one-half the total expenditure for the two previous years, namely £400, he would be satisfied. With regard to the promise made by the Premier last year that this vote would disappear by yearly instalments, he had been surprised to find that two Government supporters had asked that the promise should be broken. The members for Subiaco and Claremont had waited on the Premier and asked that the vote should not disappear.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The item had been very largely reduced this year although not because it came under the promise made by the Government with regard to main roads. It was not a main road grant last year, but a special grant. The department thought, however, that as the road had been constructed entirely for the Government, and been maintained by them in the past, it should be looked upon as a main road; consequently it now appeared on the Estimates under that heading. Some £300 of the money appearing on the Estimates had been spent on work done at the end of the last financial year. The liability on the 30th June last was Yallingup £229, and the Lake-road £72.

Mr. George: Are there any rates?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The rates did not amount to much. This road was under a different heading from main roads. Main roads were maintained by the local authorities, and they were allocated the grant which was voted every year, and that amount was being reduced one-third, by arrangement. This road had never been in the hands of the roads board; to this date it was a Government road, and the only road in the country which was a Government road in that sense. The Government had to maintain it, and the more that was spent this year on its maintenance, the less, perhaps, it would be necessary to spend next year. If it was the wish of the Committee that the vote should be transferred to the local authorities, steps would be taken to see whether that could be done. The department had not been extravagant in the amount that had been provided, and it was no use fulminating against an item of this description. If wrong had been done in the past it had been done with eyes open and it was not the fault of the present Administration but of every Administration. We could not justly ask the roads board to take over the roads which were made specially for the purpose of opening up the caves district, and which now led to an accommodation house, which paid no rates or taxes. There was considerable revenue derived by the railways from those who travelled over the line to reach the caves, and the accommodation house also received a good deal of revenue.

Mr. Collier: What does Bignell get out of it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No doubt Mr. Bignell was doing well. He was running an up-to-date motor car along the road to the caves. The question was whether we could justly hand over that road and force the roads board to maintain it. It was certainly not advisable to let it go into disrepair and ruin. It would be advisable to maintain it as cheaply as possible. At any rate the Law Department would be consulted as

to whether the vote could be transferred to the roads board, but there was always the danger that the local authority would neglect the road, because it was a better road than the others in the district, and it might be allowed to get into disrepair by the board spending the money on adjacent roads.

Mr. HAYWARD: Having a good knowledge of the country through which the road passed he could say that it was poor country, and that there were not many settlers there and if the maximum rate were levied it would not go far towards maintaining the road. Members appeared to lose sight of the fact however that a considerable revenue was derived by the Government by reason of the number of people who travelled on the railway to go to the caves. If it were not for these caves very few indeed would proceed to Busselton, except in the summer months.

Mr. Collier: An important town like Busselton?

Mr. HAYWARD: Busselton was not an important town. The road in question had been made for a special purpose, and it would be utterly impossible for the roads board to take it over and maintain it properly. To allow the road to get into a state of disrepair after what had been spent upon it would be a criminal.

Mr. KEENAN: If the Government had money spare they could not do better than to spend it on making an easy approach to places such as the caves; but we were economising in every direction where the material progress of the State would not be retarded and if that was the idea of the Government then a road of the character of the Caves road should not be maintained in a high state of efficiency, at the expense of a reduction in other votes, which meant so much to the people. This was certainly a vote in which the Government might well economise, and no argument had been advanced which would justify him in giving it his support.

Mr. HOLMAN: It would have been interesting to have heard the ex-Attorney General express similar views last year. It was true that many thousands of pounds had been spent on this road, and

he had a keen recollection of the Ministry making a promise that once the road was finished the expenditure would cease. The promise had been made time after time and yet the item was still on the Estimates. The only revenue derived from the road went to those who were running vehicles to the caves and who charged high rates for the passengers they carried. The money would do far more good if spent in an agricultural or mining district. It would be better to construct a railway at once than to go on spending large sums on the maintenance of the road. So long as expenditure of this class went on, so long would other and more deserving parts of the State have to suffer. The present Attorney General had moved last year that the vote be reduced by £500.

The Minister for Works: There was no item for £500 last year.

Mr. HOLMAN: Well, it had been the vote for the Caves Board, which amounted to the same thing. In criticising the roads down there the present Attorney General had said that there had been expended in one year no less a sum than £35,000. To this the then Treasurer had replied that in no one year had so great a sum been expended; but the present Attorney General had persisted that it was so. Throughout that debate one of the bitterest opponents of the vote had been the present Attorney General. He (Mr. Holman) had a vivid recollection of the Ministerial assurance being given that once the roads had been put into good order the grant would cease. It was scandalous that this money should be spent on a relatively useless road when the road to a place like Wiluna comprised a stretch of 30 miles of sand from 6 to 9 inches in depth. Was the Minister aware that the cost of dragging provisions out to Wiluna amounted to from £9 to £10 a ton? Surely the time had come when we should see about spending a little more money on such roads as that to Wiluna and a little less on a road constructed for the advantage of a few distinguished visitors who came here to travel at the expense of the State. Did the Minister think that anything like £500 would be derived from the road?

The Minister for Works: Indirectly, yes.

Mr. HOLMAN: The coach proprietors and others continually on the road should be made to pay something directly towards its upkeep. Last year the then Minister for Works had given a positive assurance that once the roads were completed and put into good order the Committee would not be called upon to further maintain the roads.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister had told them that of the £500 set down in the Estimates something like £300 was already owing. That left £200 to be expended during the present financial year, half of which was practically gone. It would be interesting to know how much of the £200 was left. Possibly a later opportunity might be seized to inquire as to what had really been the expenditure on these roads, when the question might be better considered as to whether the time had not come when capital expenditure in that direction should cease. The point that appealed to him was as to whether it was worth the Committee's while to take any action seeing that of the £500 no less than £300 had been expended, or, at least, was owing on the 30th June. It was doubtful whether there was now more than a few pounds left out of the balance of £200. All would agree that if the liabilities had been incurred the State would have to pay them.

Mr. SCADDAN: In view of the fact that a large portion of the money had already been expended, he would ask leave to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. W. PRICE moved an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £200.

Sooner or later we must decide whether the road was to be for all time a charge upon the public purse, and the present was an opportune time to decide it. We were in duty bound to pay £300 of the item, but we were not in duty bound to pay anything beyond that. The number of visitors to the caves was diminishing, and in view of the fact that the Government were in

such financial straits that they could not assist settlers with roads, we should cut down the item to the amount that had actually been spent. Apparently the road was for the benefit of Mr. Bignell's motor 'bus. Could not Mr. Bignell be asked to contribute towards the maintenance of the road?

Mr. HOLMAN: In 1907 the Premier gave assurance that no more money would be spent on the road.

The Minister for Works: No more capital expenditure on the construction of the road.

Mr. HOLMAN: The promise was that once the road was constructed no more money would be spent on it, and it was surprising to see this new item on the Estimates.

The Minister for Works: It was on the Estimates last year.

Mr. HOLMAN: That was incorrect.

The Minister for Works: On page 43 of the Estimates was shown £400 for the Yallingup road, and £200 for the Yallingup-Margaret River road.

Mr. HOLMAN: Those items were for construction.

The Honorary Minister: No; for maintenance.

Mr. HOLMAN: Assurance was given more than once by more than one Minister that expenditure on these roads would cease. Why should we pay about 5s. a head for carrying persons out to the Caves, to maintain a road going out from a place which, according to the member for Wellington, was of no importance, and running through country where the land was poor and practically useless, and where there was practically no settlement?

Mr. JOHNSON: There was a liability of £300 last year and the Minister was providing £500 to pay off the liability, leaving only £200 for this year. In those circumstances he could not support the amendment, if we did not strike out the item altogether. He was prepared to let it go providing the Minister gave assurance that there would be a reduction of 30 per cent. next year on this year's expenditure. That would be a reduction of 30 per cent. on the £200 available for this year's expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That could not be done. The money had to be spent before the heavy rains because the country got so flooded. A sum of £80 was spent last year and there was still a liability of £300 at the end of the year. A sum of £200 would not be sufficient for next year, though it would carry the department through this year. The proper way was to take £400, the average of the £600 and the £200, and make a reduction on that £400 by 30 per cent.

Mr. JOHNSON was prepared to let it go on the understanding that the vote this year was to be £200. Then we could leave it to next year to argue what would be done.

Mr. SCADDAN: It would be better to have the Minister's assurance rather than to discuss the matter again next year. Items were seldom altered once they appeared on the Estimates. It was better to accept the Minister's basis and have the reduction on £400 appearing on the Estimates next year.

The Minister for Works: We will make it £270 next year.

Amendment put and negatived.

Roads (New Works)), £10,500.

Roads throughout the State at pound for pound, £10,500:

Mr. SCADDAN: A new procedure was adopted this year in connection with the Estimates for new roads, and it would be well for members to be informed whether they could discuss certain items in the schedule after others appearing in front of them had been passed over. The items of the schedule were not numbered.

The CHAIRMAN: Although all the items were embodied in one, they were distinctly and practically separate items, yet not numbered. They must be discussed seriatim as they appeared, and after the second item had been discussed, for instance, it would be quite impossible to go back to the first, and so on right through.

Item, Claremont, Point Resolution to Old Men's Depot Road, £150:

Mr. SCADDAN: Was the money to be spent for construction or maintenance?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The road connected Claremont with the Old Men's Depot, and was naturally built for the benefit of the depot. It would be unfair to ask the people of Claremont to maintain a road existing entirely to give access to a Government institution. The money was for maintenance.

Mr. SCADDAN: The road not only served the depot, but a considerable amount of property well held but not occupied. The Government were making good roads to enhance persons' property. Frequently the reason assigned for voting money for such works was that they were for the convenience of Government property which paid no rates. As a matter of fact it would be better if the Government met the oft-expressed desire of municipalities and allowed special properties to be rated, as they would by that means save the enormous sums spent from time to time for the maintenance of roads, and the total of which was more than the municipal subsidy would amount to.

[Mr. Taylor took the Chair.]

Mr. HOLMAN: If the work to be done were maintenance, why was it that the item appeared under "New Works"? It seemed as if the idea was to conceal what was going to be done with the money.

Mr. FOULKES: The road was made two or three years ago, and all the traffic on it was in connection with the Old Men's Depot. The road was not for the benefit of the residents at all. It was a portion of the road from Claremont to the depot.

Mr. JOHNSON: It would be ridiculous to spend £150 to maintain a road from Point Resolution to the Old Men's Depot, the distance of which was only about a quarter of a mile. Surely the item was meant for the Claremont-Old Men's Depot road which was two or two and a-half miles in length. He moved—

That the words "Point Resolution" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was unnecessary to make the amendment. for it was provided that all the items in the schedule now being discussed could be varied as the exigencies of the work might

warrant. The sum of £10,500 was allocated in accordance with the most urgent demands of the local authorities. The Government were making those local authorities back their opinion by contributing pound for pound with the Government. If, when it came to the test, the local authorities said there was a more urgent work upon which the money should be spent, it would be within the discretion of the Minister, after inquiry, to vary the work. The schedule was really not portion of the Estimates, but was merely printed for the information of members. If the local authorities did not pay pound for pound the Government subsidy would not be forthcoming.

The CHAIRMAN: Was the member for Guildford desirous of moving his amendment?

Mr. JOHNSON: The words should be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment could not be accepted as it altered the destination of the vote.

Mr. JOHNSON: The amendment would not alter the destination of the vote. Anyhow it would be sufficient if the Minister guaranteed that the money was to be spent on the road from Claremont to the Old Men's Depot.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Mr. SCADDAN: In previous years each of these amounts had appeared as an item. It seemed that the purpose of the Minister in putting the items in this fashion was to prevent light being thrown on some of them.

The Minister for Works: You can have your opinion; you know it is wrong.

Mr. SCADDAN: Then what was the object in putting the items in this fashion?

The Minister for Works: Did the hon. member hear me introduce the Estimates?

Mr. SCADDAN: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Did he listen?

Mr. SCADDAN: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Then he got the explanation.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Minister apparently imagined that the department understood that when a vote appeared on the Estimates obviously the Minister had

no option but to pay the amount irrespective of what the local authority did. The Minister knew that was not the case. The department made an inspection of all roads, in connection with which a grant was given, to see that the local authority had been spending the money wisely and well, and would not pay the money over until they found that the local authority had done the work well. Under the new arrangement the Minister would not pay unless the work was well done. The Minister, no doubt, hoped that there would be no discussion on the total, and immediately after the total was passed he could do what he liked with the item. It was at the discretion of the Minister, irrespective of what Parliament might do, as to how these moneys should be expended. It was astonishing that members could not move to alter the destination of the money while the Minister could do just as he pleased with it. Such a thing should be protested against. Now it would be, that whoever got the ear of the Minister would secure the advantage. Some reason should be given why it was found necessary to grant this extended power to the Minister in charge of the vote.

Mr. ANGWIN: The residents of certain areas might bring under the notice of members the necessity of having a road constructed or improvements made, and the request would then be placed before the Minister. The Minister might reply that if the roads board or local authority would expend what might be given them in the direction desired assistance would be given. After that had been done it might be found that the local authorities had used the money in a different way altogether. The blame might not be placed on the shoulders of the Minister, because he might have been led astray. It would be wise, however, to delete the note which appeared in the Estimates, and which read, "Items may be varied as the exigencies of the work may warrant." If this were struck out the local authorities would be compelled to spend the vote in the manner set down in the Estimates. Would such an amendment be in order?

The CHAIRMAN: Such an amendment could not be accepted.

Mr. Scaddan: It will not alter the vote.

Mr. ANGWIN: The effect of the amendment would be solely to prevent the local authority from altering the vote.

Mr. SCADDAN: The question suggested by the member for East Fremantle should certainly be considered. The total would not be affected at all. The words in question only gave power to the Minister to vary the items if he felt so inclined.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member could not move to reduce the item. Why did the member for Ivanhoe want to be so childish in his expressions. He seemed to have been taking a delight during the last two or three days in spending a great deal of time over the discussion of a number of matters.

Mr. Bolton: It is tit-for-tat.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Ivanhoe was no doubt within the four corners of the Standing Orders, and he could say what he liked, but he (the Minister) was not going to be dictated to and bounced by that member as to the items under consideration. If the hon. member liked to move to strike out the item he could do so, but he should not quarrel with the Chair, when the Chair had decided that the words the member for East Fremantle desired to delete could not be deleted. The member for Ivanhoe had occupied the time of the Committee for two solid hours in discussing a small item. If hon. members thought he (the Minister) was wrong he was sorry, but he thought that he had done something which was a decided improvement. When introducing the Estimates he explained the matter very fully, and the member for Ivanhoe, as usual, either did not listen or was out of the Chamber, and he had not taken the trouble to read up *Hansard* to see what the explanation was. Now he wanted that explanation repeated. He (the Minister) was not going to repeat himself, as the hon. member had done during the last half a dozen hours. It was his (the Minister's) intention to stick to the schedule if the local authorities would come up to the mark and contribute their share to it. If the local auth-

orities would come up to the mark, and if it was proved that there was another work which was more urgent, then the question of transferring the money would receive consideration.

Mr. Scaddan: Have you regulations to that effect?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister could do it.

Mr. Scaddan: At his own sweet will.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What was the Minister's own sweet will, except to exercise his judgment. That was what he was there for. He allocated the total sum of money on the advice of his expert officers, and apart from that he knew nothing about these items; the expert officers furnished him with their reports and their advice. The power of the Minister was ten times greater than this paltry amount, and hon. members trusted him.

Mr. Scaddan: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member was not generally disposed to trust anyone, and it was a wonder that he trusted himself. At any rate, he hoped he had the confidence of a majority of the members of the Committee even if he had not that of the member for Ivanhoe. He intended to deal fairly with the money voted. His object was to get £20,000 spent on these works, and that object would be attained, because the local authorities would have to spend some of their own ordinary revenue to secure the money set apart for the several works. The requests which came in from the different roads boards were extravagant in the extreme. It was so in all the districts and he was pinning them down by this arrangement under which any urgent work must be backed up by their spending some of their own money on it in conjunction with the Government grant. If it was the most urgent work in the district they ought to be prepared to expend their own money on it.

Mr. Scaddan: Is that the secret of the transfer of the Caves road vote?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member's meaning was not clear to him because the Caves road vote had never been roads board work at all but

had always been carried out by the Government.

Mr. SCADDAN: From the explanation of the Minister he had discovered the real reasons for the transference of the Sussex roads item to the vote for maintenance of main roads. If it had remained as a grant to the roads board the money would never have been expended because the Sussex roads board had not sufficient revenue to raise the necessary pound for pound.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot now discuss the Sussex roads board.

Mr. SCADDAN: These items were for all roads boards which, of course, included the Sussex roads board.

The CHAIRMAN: The vote the hon. member was discussing did not come into the schedule.

Mr. SCADDAN: It was not the Sussex roads item which he was discussing, but its transference to another vote. The explanation of the Minister had disclosed the secret why that item had been transferred to the vote for maintenance of main roads. Other poor unfortunate roads boards not represented by the Minister had had to find their pound for pound before they could secure the grant. There were scores of roads boards whose total revenue was not sufficient to take up the amounts provided on the Estimates. They had not been made aware of this change. It was a scheme devised by the Minister to surprise the roads boards. Next year, perhaps, when the scheme was more clearly understood, sufficient pressure would be brought to bear to restore the old plan of dealing with these items.

[Mr. Daglish resumed the Chair.]

Mr. SCADDAN: It had been discovered that hon. members could not reduce any single item in this schedule. The result was to render the whole thing absurd. Hon. members had to take the Minister's word that everything was all right. He moved an amendment—

That the item, Claremont, Point Resolution to Old Men's Depot road be reduced by £50.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment could not be taken. This was not an

item, in the sense that it did not represent an actual vote of money. The item hon. members were discussing was that of £10,500, and it was open to the hon. member to move any reduction he pleased on that total, but it was impossible for him to move to strike out an item which, after all, was purely informative and nothing else.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Despite the attitude taken up by the member for Ivanhoe—

Mr. GEORGE: On a point of order. Hon. members would not have an opportunity under the ruling of discussing a single item in the schedule. There were items no member would like to accept without an explanation from the Minister. In order to get what they wanted hon. members would have to move to reduce the total.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member had misunderstood the ruling. Earlier in the evening he (the Chairman) had ruled that hon. members could not discuss these various items of the schedule as if they were items of the Estimates. To that ruling he still adhered. What he had ruled in reply to the member for Ivanhoe was that it was impossible to strike out any of these items in the schedule or to alter those items which, as hon. members would see, were informative items, to be varied as the exigencies of the work might warrant. It was quite possible, without discussing the schedule, to reduce the total to any extent hon. members liked, or to omit it from the Estimates, or to deal with it in any other fashion.

Mr. GEORGE: Then, discussion on the various items would be allowed, and any items of which hon. members did not approve could be totalled and an hon. member might move that the sum be reduced from the total of £10,500.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This method of arranging the items had been adopted with the desire of overcoming certain difficulties which had been apparent for several years past. One of those difficulties lay in the fact that requests for works coming to the department from all over the State were so numerous that it was practically impossible

to ascertain, before the Estimates were made up, which were really deserving. For some time past the custom had been for roads boards, when making requests for assistance, to state how much of their own funds they were prepared to expend. That practice might not be necessary in all cases, but as a general rule the amount a roads board was prepared to expend was a pretty safe guide as to the importance of the work. Presumably the amount the Minister would actually grant would, to a large extent, depend upon the amount the local authority was prepared to put up. As the schedule stood, it indicated the general manner in which the Minister proposed to allocate the various sums; at the same time it left to the Minister a certain discretionary power to modify his proposals. The system would lead to restricting the expenditure of public funds to matters of urgency.

Mr. BATH: It was not satisfactory to members to know they could reduce the total sum. There might be items not deserving of consideration. The fact that a roads board was willing to give pound for pound was no guarantee that the road was deserving of Government assistance. If the items were distinct members could deal with the individual votes.

Mr. KEENAN: There was no need for the Minister to make available to a roads board any item passed on the Estimates even when items were set out distinctly and not in a schedule as on this occasion. The objection to this innovation of having a lump vote with a schedule was that it was useless taking exception to the expenditure of individual items. There should be some serious reason advanced for the innovation. It was to be hoped the Minister would reconsider the position.

Mr. ANGWIN: There was an amount voted last year for a road to Coolgardie on the pound for pound basis. He would be satisfied with the system provided the Minister gave ample notice to the members for the district in regard to any change in any of the items in the schedule so that members could see there were no unfair tactics used to transfer the expenditure from the place for which it

was intended when represented on the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No State in the Commonwealth gave the items as was done in Western Australia. The whole roads and bridges vote in New South Wales was put on the Estimates in one lump sum, and there was a schedule at the back of the Estimates giving the information. There was a valid reason for altering the system, but there was no idea of avoiding discussion on any of the items. Members could discuss them and delete them if necessary.

Mr. Collier: The Chairman says we cannot do that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If a member took exception to an item and indicated that he was going to reduce the total by a certain sum equal to that item it would be accepted as an indication, and he (the Minister) would have it struck out. His desire was for the roads boards to take the responsibility of their own recommendations by backing them up on the pound for pound basis. There had been far too many haphazard demands made on the Works Department by all districts, and this was the best way to get over the difficulty.

Mr. Scaddan: The best way to stifle discussion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At any rate the member for Guildford in conversation had expressed satisfaction with the proposal so long as the details were given in the schedule.

Mr. WALKER: Parliament should control the expenditure of every item even to the most minute sum. Now, the Minister wanted the right to spend the money irrespective of Parliament.

The Minister for Works: I do that already under the general roads vote of £30,000.

Mr. WALKER: The Minister spent that vote as necessity occurred always subject to criticism by Parliament. That was a kind of advance vote. Here we gave the Minister discretionary power to starve some constituencies and feed others, possibly to work political ends.

The Minister for Works: I am bound to expend it according to the schedule if they contribute their pound for pound.

Mr. WALKER: That was the trouble. The Minister bound himself to spend the money before consulting Parliament. Ministers could make up their schedule to suit their political purposes, yet Parliament was powerless. Where was the Kanowna electorate in the schedule?

The Premier: Where is my electorate?

Mr. WALKER: If the electorate of Kanowna were neglected, he would be powerless; and at any time, behind the back of Parliament, the Minister could change the vote without the member for the district knowing anything about it. The power of representation was taken out of the hands of representatives, and arrogated by the Minister for Works.

The Minister for Works: Local authorities will know how the money is being spent, and they will communicate with their member.

Mr. WALKER: It would be useless to communicate with him as he was shorn of all power. The whole matter was fixed by the Minister. The member could not alter a single item. The principle was an entirely wrong one. If this could be done with a roads vote, every other vote could be dealt with in a similar manner. There need be no Estimates in detail for the future, and members could be asked to put everything in the hands of Ministers and allow them to do as they liked. If that were so, why have Parliament at all?

The Premier: The items are set out.

Mr. WALKER: That was so, but members could not alter one of them. If an alteration were made on the suggestion of a member it would be solely by the grace of the Minister. Members in their corporate powers stood higher than Ministers, higher even than the Crown itself, in a matter of this kind, and when an attempt was being made to take all power from them.

The Minister for Works: There is an item North-East Coolgardie, road to Gordon Townsite, £150. Is not that in the member's district?

Mr. WALKER: That was one item, but the member for the district could not touch it. If he saw that it would be wrong to spend money in that way, nothing he did could alter it.

The Minister for Works: You have a better chance now than under the old system, for I can alter it now.

Mr. WALKER: The item could not be touched. The traditions of Parliament were being frustrated and nullified by the action of the Minister. A few more steps in this direction and members would be dummies in the House without any power to advance the interests or direct the growth of any part of the State. Members should not allow the item to pass without a protest. The item should be struck out with a view of forcing the Government to bring in amended Estimates so that members could have their rights restored. The privilege of members must ever be maintained, and any encroachment on their rights must be resisted to the utmost. Let once encroachment be made in this respect and there would be no end to it. We were going back to the old days of despotism and bureaucracy. The Estimates should be re-committed in such a form that every item could be adopted.

Mr. SCADDAN moved—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	22

Majority against .. 3

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Bath	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Swan
Mr. Collier	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gill	Mr. Walker
Mr. Gourley	Mr. Ware
Mr. Heilmann	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Horan	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnson	(Teller).
Mr. McDowall	
Mr. O'Loughlen	

NOES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Male
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Carson	Mr. Monger
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Davies	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Nanson
Mr. George	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Gregory	Mr. J. Price
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Jacoby	(Teller).
Mr. Keenan	

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. BOLTON: Certain requests might come in from different electorates, and it would remain with the Minister, or his expert officers to determine what item should be put on the Estimates to submit to Parliament. Some requests might come along and be pigeon-holed, but those from Sussex or Albany might secure attention. Then the items were lumped, and it followed that only the Minister had the final right to submit to the House what he thought were proper. In such circumstances how were members going to show their approval or disapproval of the individual items. Would the Minister inform the Committee what the expert officers reported with regard to Swanbourne-terrace at Cottesloe. Had the Minister reason to believe that Cottesloe would expend £500 on Swanbourne-terrace. What right had Swanbourne-terrace to be down for £500 when there were other roads which were more necessary, and which, perhaps, could be constructed for £150? What right had the Minister to arrogate to himself the right to say which were the best items to submit to Parliament. The Minister had made a mistake, and if he had £500 that he wanted to spend he could have done better by giving it to five different districts. It was a waste of money to make a road like Swanbourne-terrace at a cost of £1,000, when that £1,000 would have done far better work in outlying districts.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister referred to a conversation that he had with him (Mr. Johnson), and the only regrettable thing about it was that the Minister did not carry out the advice that was given to him. The Minister decided to introduce the Estimates in a lump sum, which would represent pound for pound subsidies on the construction or maintenance of roads, and he (Mr. Johnson) told the Minister that he was opposed to lump sum votes, and that he thought Parliament was opposed to them also, but he added that if the Minister proposed to give the items there would not be much objection, but that was exactly what the Minister had not done.

The Minister for Works: I have done that.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister had done it in such a way that the Committee could not alter the votes.

The Minister for Works: How could it be a lump sum vote if I have given the individual items?

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister did not carry out the advice that was given to him, and because he had not done that he had got himself into the trouble he was now in. The Minister proposed to spend this money, and the Committee had no power to alter any of the votes, consequently it was the most objectionable method that could be adopted. It was proposed to give the Minister over £10,000 to distribute, not as the Committee thought best, but as the Minister thought best. Even if all were satisfied with the proposal as outlined in the Estimates, there was no guarantee that the Minister would carry it out. The Minister could distribute this £10,000 just as he liked.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The information which the member for North Fremantle had complained about not having received, had never been given to the Committee in the past. The Government received 10 or 20 demands where they could only place one on the Estimates.

Mr. Bolton: Who decides?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister always decided that.

Mr. Scaddan: Subject to the approval of Parliament.

The Premier: To reduce only.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member had argued that the Minister had discretionary power in putting the items down on the Estimates. The Minister had always that power. The hon. member had further complained that he did not know what demands had been made by the local governing bodies, and so could not compare them with the items on the Estimates. These demands had never been put before the Committee. The member for Kanowna had thought that he was left out altogether, but he had found that it was not so.

Mr. Walker : I knew that was there, but I knew that we could not touch it.

Mr. BOLTON : I desire to move that the Swanbourne-terrace item be struck out—how can I do it ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : If the hon. member would move to reduce the total by the £500 set down for the item, he (the Minister) would take it as an indication that the Swanbourne-terrace item should be eliminated. The hon. member had said previously that it did not matter whether the Committee passed an item, because the Minister need not expend the money unless he were satisfied with regard to it.

Mr. Scaddan : We do not want to give you the power to spend the full amount.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Did the hon. member wish the Committee to understand that he did not want the Minister to have the power to expend the £150 provided for the Kanowna district on some other work in that district, if the local body were to come along and explain that they had made a mistake and that they had some more important work which they wished to go on with.

Mr. Walker : Under this scheme the member for the district will not know what you are doing.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : There need be no fear on that score, for he would give instructions that the members for the respective districts should be advised of any proposed change.

Mr. SCADDAN : The Minister had said that previously when the vote was itemised the lump sum was not stated ; as a matter of fact, it had always been stated. There was no reason to depart from the old method, beyond a desire to take away from Parliament the power to reduce each item set down by the Minister. The purport of it was to gag Parliament. What right had the Minister to take away the power of Parliament to control the expenditure.

The Minister for Works : Parliament does control the expenditure.

Mr. SCADDAN : Under the new system Parliament would not be able to control

the expenditure, except as to the total vote. Judging by the attitude of the Government we would next year have the total sum of the Estimates put down on one page, and the details, if any, shown as a schedule. Then the present Minister would be doing as he wished to do to-day, namely, to prevent Parliament controlling the expenditure of the money taken from the taxpayers.

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. member could hardly say that. It was out of order for the hon. member to say that the Minister desired to prevent Parliament controlling the expenditure.

Mr. SCADDAN : The Minister had taken to himself more powers than were possessed by Parliament. He did not accuse the Minister of attempting to do this, but could anyone say he was not doing it under the present system ? The procedure adopted by the Minister was not warranted, and should not be tolerated by the Committee. A number of Government supporters did not agree with it. The difficulty might be overcome by the Minister agreeing to withdraw the schedule and bring it down subsequently as supplementary Estimates.

Mr. COLLIER : The Minister had said that if a member desired that any items should be struck out he could accomplish his object by reducing the total amount. Suppose that 20 members desired to strike out, each an item, and that the total of those items amounted to £500, one of those 20 members might move to reduce the total by £500, but the Committee as a whole might not be agreeable to this, although agreeable to reducing it by £250 ; which of the items would, in those circumstances, be taken ?

Mr. Bath : You can only move one reduction.

Mr. COLLIER : If the Committee decide to reduce the total vote by £2,000 it would be impossible for the Minister to say to which items the £2,000 applied. No good was served by the alteration except that it prevented members discussing the items ; but perhaps that was the object. At any rate the Committee was gagged, and it was a charge that

should not be countenanced and was not justified in any way.

Mr. JOHNSON objected to lump-sum votes because the distribution was not equitable. The only course for members was to strike out the whole vote of £10,500 to give the opportunity to the Government to introduce supplementary Estimates, so that members might deal with the individual items of expenditure.

Mr. Bath : If we strike it out they will throw the onus on the Opposition.

Mr. JOHNSON : If we struck out the vote and it was not re-introduced in a constitutional form Ministers would go through the country and say to the roads board, "We would do it for you but for the Opposition."

Mr. Jacoby : If struck out, they cannot be reintroduced this Session.

Mr. WALKER : Why should not the Government withdraw the whole item 46 and introduce it in a proper way ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : If the Chairman would permit it he was willing to move the whole schedule into the 1909-10 column.

Mr. WALKER : Here we were met with an emergency, and though the Committee might not have the power he believed the House would have the absolute control to order this to be done.

Mr. Bath : It certainly would not be changing the destination of the vote.

Mr. WALKER : It would only be doing a cherished thing, giving the right of free debate and the control of the public purse. At any rate the House was the supreme arbiter of its own course.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : In order that members could deal with the items as they choose, he would be willing to move the column into the expenditure column if such were possible. It was never intended to burke discussion, or he would not have put the particulars there. It was hard to understand why such a fuss was made about a Minister spending £10,000, for under the development of agriculture, and the development of mining, hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent by the Ministers without a word to Parliament, the lump sums being voted for the year. Millions of pounds had been spent in that way.

Mr. Johnson : And wrongly spent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Ministers did it on their own responsibility, and had to suffer if they did wrongly.

Mr. Bolton : How would they suffer ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : By being put out of office. Ministers must have discretionary powers in spending public funds, of course subject to audit and Parliamentary criticism. He could not see why there should be such a personal attack because he had made what was termed an innovation ; it was not an innovation in New South Wales.

Mr. Walker : There a department of roads and bridges deals with the vote, and the schedule may be discussed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : If the Chairman or the House could give him power to move to transfer the items bodily into the expenditure column, he would do so. It was his desire to assist the Committee if he could. He did not desire, however, to waste time by withdrawing the Estimates.

Mr. JACOBY : Advantage might be taken of the fact that there was a slight misprint. The items appeared as if the sums were to be expended in the year 1908-9, whereas they were to be spent in 1909-10. If it were possible to move the total of £10,500 to another column and turn the other items into their proper places the difficulty would be overcome.

Mr. WALKER : It was within the power of the Committee to amend the Schedule. It was printed for members' discussion.

Mr. BATH : It had been ruled previously that a consequential error in the Estimates could be amended. The whole of the schedule was in error because members were asked to vote money for the financial year 1909-10, whereas, as a matter of fact, the item appeared under 1908-9.

The CHAIRMAN : While anxious to help the Committee in any way, he was not prepared to sanction a procedure which he had very grave doubts about. There was no power, and he did not know any precedent, for an amendment on the Estimates to be made, once they had been brought down, except in the direction of reducing or omitting items.

Such had been ruled time after time. Even where an error had been made, it had been held that an obvious error could not be rectified as to a number. At present he knew of no authority by which he could accept the proposition suggested by the Minister. He would be quite willing if he had the opportunity either to look the point up or, if the Committee desired, to get the views of the Speaker, by having the matter referred to him.

Mr. GEORGE: The only item before the Committee was the £10,500 of which there were no particulars. The subjects which had been erroneously discussed were in the vote for 1908-9. The vote for this year was £10,500 so members might discuss it without the schedule at all.

Mr. WALKER: The Minister should report progress so that the authorities might be consulted between now and the next sitting of the Committee. There was nothing in any rule or authority which curtailed the limit of a debate and the action of this House in the control of money. There was a well established rule that we should not increase the burdens of the people. This was not increasing any burdens, but was doing what was in perfect line with all the traditions we had, namely, enabling us to discuss the items in particular votes to lessen the burdens of the people, if needs be, by removing the items if necessary.

The PREMIER: If progress were reported and the same Estimates now before the Committee were introduced on Tuesday next with the items of the schedule in the proper column, would that be in order? If so, that would meet the position.

Mr. Walker: The Minister could withdraw the items for the time being.

Mr. Bath: In order to do that notice of motion would have to be given.

Mr. BOLTON: If on Tuesday next a different set of Estimates were put before members with the figures in another column, would the Chairman feel called upon to notice the alteration?

Mr. BATH: A suggested way out of the difficulty would be that as far as the items in the schedule were concerned,

members should discuss them, their remarks taken a note of by the Minister, and then the Government might give an undertaking that future Estimates would be brought down in such a way that members could discuss each vote.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Would it be possible to discuss each item on this Schedule, and take a vote on it, and then if there should be any reductions made the total could be reduced accordingly.

Mr. Jacoby: It would be in order to do that with the support of the House.

The CHAIRMAN: A procedure of that kind would be entirely wrong, and he was not prepared to adopt it. There was no warrant to justify him in taking that course. The ruling which had been given was based on the fact that the vote before the Committee was one vote of £10,500, the 1909-10 schedule was merely a piece of information which the Minister might have held a typewritten copy of for himself, and not read to the Committee, or might have published on the back of the Estimates, or need not have published at all. Therefore, the schedule was not a schedule in the same sense and liable to the same alteration as the schedule of a Bill. To alter that schedule would be to alter the destination of the vote of £10,500, which would be entirely opposed to the practice of Parliament, and which the Chairman had no power to allow.

Mr. WALKER: It would be better to report progress with the view of submitting a motion on Tuesday, to enable the Committee to get a vote of the whole House upon the subject. The House could regulate its own conduct. There would be no violation of the law in that respect. The House could allow what had always been allowed, namely, a discussion on all the items making up the total. Every branch of the public service had its total, and in every part of the Estimates it was possible to discuss items, or skip items, and deal with the total. The House could authorise that to be done. The Minister ought to report progress, and on Tuesday the matter could be

settled by a vote of the House. It might be wise if he were to move as a matter of privilege, and conclude with a motion. A matter of privilege was the right of members, and he moved—

That the whole of the schedule be open to discussion and amendment by members.

The CHAIRMAN: That motion could not be taken while the House was in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Perhaps it would be better to report progress with the view of having these items discussed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.30 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 30th November, 1909.

	PAGE
Bills: Legitimation of Children, 1r.	1655
Legal Practitioners' Act Amendment, 3r.	1655
Transfer of Land Act Amendment, 2r.	1655
Registration of Deeds, etc., Amendment, 2r.	1657
Electoral Act Amendment, 2r.	1957
Agricultural Bank Act Amendment, 2r.	1683
District Fire Brigades, Com.	1669

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

BILL—LEGITIMATION OF CHILDREN.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been brought forward in consequence of representations

made by the associated banks of the State, also solicitors of the State and the Perth Chamber of Commerce. They have requested that the leasehold interests under the Land Act of 1898 should be registered under the Transfer of Land Act, so that the security of title afforded under the Transfer of Land Act, and also the facilities for dealing in land under that Act should be extended to leasehold interest. While registration continues under the Land Act during leasehold stages of conditional purchase and under the Transfer of Land Act, when the freehold is acquired, there is necessarily a break from the time that it passes from having been dealt with under the Lands Act and the period the title is obtained. True, a mortgage may be registered at the lands office, but instances have been known, although a lien may have been registered at the lands office in relation to a conditional purchase, where certificates of title have been issued, under the Lands Transfer Act without the knowledge of the mortgagor or the person holding a lien under the Lands Act. The law in this respect varies in the different States. In Victoria both freehold and leasehold interests are registered under the Transfer of Land Act. In the other States the freehold interests alone are capable of being registered in the titles office. As regards registration under the Transfer of Lands Act in this State it was provided in the Transfer of Land Act, but it was a dead letter as leaseholds had never been brought under its operation. In the amending Act of 1902 the provision for registering leaseholds was repealed, and in consequence at the present time there is no provision at all for the registration of leaseholds under the Transfer of Land Act. This Bill provides "that all Crown leases granted under the Land Act, 1898, after the commencement of this Act, for a term not less than 5 years, shall be issued to the Titles Office and brought under the operations of the Transfer of Land Act" exactly as if they were freehold. The Bill also provides that lessees holding leases before the commencement of this Act have the option