

and Income Tax Act" should be amended so as to provide for a greater tax on income not earned by personal effort."

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 16th February, 1915.

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

QUESTION—WHEAT HANDLING CHARGES.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, What amount per bushel are the Millers' Association receiving for acquiring wheat from the farmers for the Foodstuff Board? 2, Is it correct that a charge of 2d. per bushel is made? If so, is it the intention of the Government to direct the Foodstuff Board to deduct that amount only from the farmers who have wheat to sell, instead of the charge of 4d. now made? 3, As the Foodstuff Board are acquiring this wheat for the benefit of the community, will he direct the Board that all charges over 2d. will be borne by the State and not by the seller of the wheat?

The PREMIER replied: 1, For acquiring and receiving in truck or lat stack, 2d. per bushel plus an additional charge for other items such as storing, handling, interest, insurance, stationery, clerical assistance, etc. 2, No, because

that is not the only charge incurred in securing this wheat as shown by answer No. 1. 3, No; the Board point out that in fixing the price they took every factor into consideration and provided and fixed 4d. per bushel as the approximate cost of acquiring, etc. If a lesser figure is to be allowed, then undoubtedly the difference between that and 4d. would be a loss to the State. Had the Board considered that 2d. or some other amount less than 4d. would have been sufficient to cover the cost of acquiring the wheat, they would have reduced the basic price—which is a generous one—accordingly. It is considered that the price now paid to farmers at country sidings is a fair one. The Government, while not desirous of making any profit from the transaction, are not prepared to suffer any loss to the general community, as the action taken is primarily in the interest of the farming community.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Extension of Time.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murehison) [4.35]: In the absence of the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) I desire to report that some progress has been made by the committee. Meetings of the committee appointed by this House and of the committee appointed by another place have been held, and it is hoped that some arrangement may be arrived at which will overcome the difficulty experienced in regard to money Bills procedure. We have not yet completed our labours, and I move—

That the time for bringing up the Joint Select Committee's report be extended to Tuesday, 23rd February.

Question passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1914-15.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 11th February; Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—*Legislative Assembly, £1,900—*agreed to.

Vote—*Joint Houses of Parliament, £1,272:*

Item—Incidental, including telephone rent, firewood, water, renewals, and other expenditure authorised by the House Committee, but exclusive of repairs to the building, £1,500:

Mr. FOLEY: Although only a small matter, I wish to draw attention to the unwarranted expense for and misuse of electric light in both Chambers. A considerable amount of current is used unnecessarily. The Government are trying to effect economy, and the House should assist them.

Mr. ALLEN: I support the hon. member. Economies should be commenced with small items. On the item for incidentals it should be possible to effect a considerable saving. Is not it possible to begin economising here right away?

The Premier: I am not responsible for this vote.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I am hardly responsible for the vote, but I have to answer for the House. In regard to the statement of the member for Leonora, probably there is extravagance. I have frequently found the lights turned on in various rooms which were not occupied, but members themselves might assist to economise by exercising care in this direction. As regards the Chamber, if members will discuss matters *ad infinitum*, we shall use a lot of current. Respecting the vote for incidentals, I have not been satisfied with the manner in which the accounts have been kept, but owing to the fact that one officer has been responsible, there has not been much opportunity to check the details. I am not reflecting on the President who is Chairman of the House Committee, and who vouches for the expenditure; he has been in ill-health. I am endeavouring to effect a change by asking that in future every item of expenditure shall be submitted to the House Committee, and that no expenditure shall be incurred without the consent of the Committee.

Mr. Allen: Is it possible to reduce this item?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I do not know, but I am hopeful that the arrangement outlined will lead to more satisfactory results. During the last year or two the health of the President, who is Chairman of the House Committee, has not been too good; and latterly the President has sent accounts on to me. To some of those accounts I have taken exception, and in future every item of expenditure will have to be submitted to the House Committee. No expenditure whatever must henceforth be incurred without the sanction of the House Committee. By that means there will be a check on the expenditure.

Mr. TAYLOR: With regard to the statement of the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) that there is extravagance in the use of electricity, I wish to say that three or four years ago I submitted a statement on this very item, having been then, as I am now, a member of the House Committee. As a result, the lights in the dining room, which at that period numbered nearly 100, were reduced to about 25, that alteration effecting a saving of between £70 and £90 per annum. The House Committee also experimented with the lighting of the Chamber, but the experiment failed.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was not on the score of economy.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was on the score of economy and also because the light was trying to members' eyes. The House Committee had the globes frosted in order to secure improvement, but it was found impossible to light the Chamber without employing the full candle power available. On the accounts generally, I wish to point out that all expenditure of any magnitude is passed by the House Committee. There are, however, certain items, such as firewood for example, which when the House Committee does not meet are purchased by the Secretary to the House Committee. Exception has been taken, I understand, by the President and Mr. Speaker to certain purchases; and these items have not yet been passed. The only means of saving

on electricity is not to allow the lights to be kept burning too long after the Houses have adjourned.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — *Joint Printing Committee*, £5,056:

Item, Printing and Distribution of *Hansard*, £1,500:

Mr. HEITMANN: Sufficient discretion is not exercised in connection with the binding and distribution of *Hansard*. I have no complaint to make that the cost of the taking of the notes and of the actual setting up in type is too great, but it has always appeared to me that the bound volumes are sent out too freely. I once attended a sale of household furniture at which a dozen volumes of *Hansard* brought 6d. Personally, I do not want the bound volumes at all. Anyone wishing to refer to a speech can see *Hansard* either in this House or in any public library. Again, it is unnecessary that the *Standing Rules and Orders* should bear the names of members in gold letters; and the binding is too elaborate. Constituencies might be substituted for members' names.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am unable to agree with the hon. member that *Hansard* is not a very useful institution. Indeed, I have found it particularly useful on several occasions during the past three or four years, and only last week was able to quote it with some effect. I wish to point out that the estimated reduction in this item is hardly likely to be achieved. Last year the cost was over £2,000, and for this year it is likely to amount to £2,500. The reduction, therefore, is misleading. The bound volumes of *Hansard* are most useful to members generally; at any rate, to myself.

Vote put and passed.

Votes — *Joint Library Committee*, £400; *Premier's Office*, £1,429; *Treasury*, £9,571—agreed to.

Vote—*Audit*, £9,850:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: In connection with this vote, I wish to take the opportunity of removing an impression conveyed by the Premier last Thursday night while replying on the general debate. The hon. gentleman stated then

that he knew I had been closeted with the Auditor General prior to the delivery of the Financial Statement, or at any rate prior to the criticism which I offered on the Budget. The Premier went on to say he wished it to be clearly understood that the statements of the leader of the Opposition were not his own, but were, in fact, the Auditor General's. By that method the Premier saddled the Auditor General with responsibility for any remarks made by me and for any charges I might bring against the Government. I have personally not the slightest concern if the Premier thinks I used either the Auditor General's information or anyone else's, but I do take exception to a general attack upon an honourable servant of this House such as the Auditor General—practically the only servant the House has. The Auditor General is honourable in every sense of the word. Although I myself have never sought information from him except such as he could properly give to any member of Parliament, yet he has always made it perfectly clear that he was not prepared to discuss figures which had not been made public, though he felt, as a servant of Parliament, that any member coming to him for explanation of figures already published was entitled to explanation of such figures. I regret that the Premier should have been, apparently, guilty of espionage in this connection. As a matter of fact, the occasion in question is about the first for twelve months on which I have called at the Auditor General's office. If the Premier was not guilty of espionage, I should be sorry to think for one moment that the new Under Treasurer, Mr. Black, had run to the Premier to tell him that the leader of the Opposition had called upon the Auditor General. Mr. Black was the only gentleman I met in the Auditor General's office, and I was introduced to him in the corridor by the Auditor General. If we want loyal service from public servants generally, and more especially from those holding high positions, if we in Western Australia wish to keep clear of the reprehensible Tammany practices observable in the govern-

ment of the United States for many years past, we must all give due credit to the gentlemen who fill these positions in the Public Service, and avoid even inferring that they have behaved discredibly. Any hon. member calling upon the Auditor General will find him perfectly above board. He will either say "yes" or "no," either "I cannot give you that information; it is not within my province," or "of course, you may have the figures; they are all published." I found from the Auditor General's report on the accounts of the State Steamships now on the Table of the House, there was an amount shown under loan expenditure which required to be adjusted by transferring to the revenue account the items properly chargeable thereto. He did not give the amount in the paragraph in his report, and I wanted to know what that amount was exactly. I looked at the balance sheet and found that whereas there had been liabilities put down as Loan expenditure amounting to £105,906, on the asset side there was an amount of £83,977. The only conclusion I could come to was that the difference between those two amounts, a very large difference as hon. members can see, should have been credited to Revenue expenditure, and not to Loan. I rang up the Auditor General to ask him if he could explain the matter to me; he could not do so over the telephone, and asked me if I would come around and see him. I went round and found he was engaged with the Under Treasurer. It was then I met the Under Treasurer in the corridor, and he took me to the Auditor General, who pointed out to me what he meant. He referred to an item of £3,111 4s. Even with that information I could not get at it. While there I asked him another question, how it came about that an amount of only £1,105 was debited as the proportion of number 3 survey for the year, when it was stated in the report that the cost of the survey had been spread over four years. Seeing that the total cost of the survey is set down at £14,316, that was a fair question to put. He explained that the debit had been made for only portion of the year, that the survey was

carried out some three or four months, I think, prior to the end of the financial year, and, therefore, only a proportion had been debited for that year, a very proper course in my opinion. But the Premier should not even cast a slur upon me when I find it desirable to call upon the Auditor General. The Premier has no right to make a statement reflecting on my honour, and to say that I was simply repeating statements which were not my own, but which emanated from the Auditor General. That is putting the Auditor General in a false position, and saddling him with the responsibility for the attack which I made on the Government. I do not know whether that was what the Premier intended, but it is up to me as a public man to clearly point out the position, to state what occurred, and to take the strongest possible exception to a slur of this description on the Auditor General conveyed by the Premier's words. I do not care twopence what the Premier thinks of me or of the way in which I get my information. As a rule I cannot get any information except what I am able to cull from public papers. When papers are made public a wrong conclusion may easily be made by public men, and in my opinion public men are justified in seeking first hand information. That is the position, and I repeat I take strong exception to the charge that has been made against an honourable servant of this House by the Premier.

The PREMIER: In connection with the matter mentioned by the leader of the Opposition I want to say that I have never made the statement that the hon. member obtained information through the Auditor General to which he was not entitled. I explained, as I was entitled to do, that just prior to making his speech in this House in criticism of the financial statement that the hon. member had been closeted with the Auditor General.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How did you know that?

The PREMIER: It doesn't matter; I did know. The fact remains that the hon. member was closeted with the Auditor General who, although he is a servant of Parliament, is under the administration

of the Colonial Treasurer. I contend, and I think members will agree if they consider the question for a moment, that anyone holding the position of Auditor General, a servant of Parliament, has no right to disclose information he may obtain in his official capacity, to anyone except through his Ministerial head.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Not to a public man?

The PREMIER: Not to anyone. If an hon. member can go there and discuss matters with the Auditor General, anyone could go, and the same statement could then be made, that they had been discussing public accounts which had already been published. The Auditor General has powers under the Audit Act as great as those of the Governor in Council. He can call for any paper in any Government Department, even the most confidential; and if that is the case I want to know if it is right that any hon. member should, without the knowledge of the Ministerial head, be entitled to be closeted with the Auditor General.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Of course he has the right; the Auditor General is the servant of Parliament.

The PREMIER: I say he has not; his administration is under the control of the Treasurer.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Nothing of the sort.

The PREMIER: The hon. member must know that the Auditor General cannot appoint an additional member to his staff without my approval as Treasurer. As I have said, the Audit Act gives the Auditor General powers equal to those of the Governor in Council. He can call for any papers or other matter, no matter how confidential, upon which he has to report to Parliament without consulting me as Ministerial head. I want to point out the danger of the position. I want to ask the hon. member (Hon. F. Wilson) or any other hon. member on the other side of the House who has had Ministerial responsibility, how he would feel if he heard every day in the week that members of Parliament had been closeted with the Auditor General. The Auditor

General is entitled to make any report he wishes to Parliament on matters concerning the finances of the State. I have never complained; but the Auditor General is the servant of Parliament generally, not of members of Parliament individually, any more than is the Under Treasurer, who is under certain control. I do not object to hon. members discussing with the Auditor General matters upon which information is desired, but the leader of the Opposition, or any other member, has never been refused information when he has submitted a request to the Auditor General in writing, or to me as the Ministerial head. At the same time it is a dangerous practice to allow members to discuss matters with an official who has equal powers with those of the Governor in Council, who can call for any papers even of the most confidential nature. What I have complained about, is that the Auditor General has published in his reports extracts from files not dealing in any way with matters affecting the finances of this State, matters supposed to be confidential, official information, legal opinions obtained on matters affecting the public service. If we cannot keep documents of that character confidential when it may mean pounds and pounds either in saving or expenditure, and the Auditor General can publish that in his report—

Member: At whose instigation—

The PREMIER: There can only be one source. The Auditor General did not go into the matter either.

Mr. Foley: Did he obtain the legal opinions?

The PREMIER: No; they were obtained by the Public Service Commissioner through the Attorney General. The files came into the hands of the Auditor General in connection with other matters, and he extracted portions and published them in his report to Parliament. It is a dangerous practice. No one can withhold papers from the Auditor General. He is authorised to do just what I as Premier can do, to ask for any papers. Therefore, it is a serious matter if members of Parliament, or anyone else, are to be permitted to be

closeted with the Auditor General unless with the knowledge of the Ministerial head. There is a proper method by which members can obtain information, and the leader of the Opposition cannot say that he has asked for information through the Ministerial head which has been refused him.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I do not think I have ever asked.

The PREMIER: Moreover, the hon. member knows that the Auditor General is the head of the Audit Department. He reports to Parliament anything which is not strictly in accordance with the law relating to the finances of the State. But the person responsible for keeping the public accounts, through the Treasurer, is the Under Treasurer. If the accounts are not correct, then the Auditor General reports. That is what we have him for, to report to Parliament untrammelled by Ministerial influence. I, as Treasurer, do not receive the Auditor General's report until it is available to every other member of the House. The Auditor General's criticism of the public accounts is available to members as soon as it is available to the Minister responsible for the finances.

Mr. Taylor: That makes his position safe.

The PREMIER: Quite safe. But seeing that he has these powers it is as serious a matter as would be for a client to interview the judge while a case is being heard for a member of Parliament to go to the Auditor General and be closeted with him before his report has been submitted to Parliament. That is the attitude I have adopted, that the Auditor General should report to Parliament on every matter. In the past—and I shall in the future—I have claimed the right, when criticism of the finances has appeared in the Auditor General's report, to reply to such criticism in order that Parliament may have both sides of the question. I cannot get his report in advance, so that the departmental reply could be put in side by side with the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General should be above suspicion.

Mr. Taylor: Have you any reason to doubt it?

The PREMIER: Not the slightest reason. I am merely pointing out the objection to such a practice growing up. The hon. member himself, if he were in my position, and knew I was closeted with the Auditor General would take objection. He would say to me, as I say to him, "I will give you the information you want, if you apply in the proper quarter, to the Minister controlling the finances of the State." I maintain that I was quite entitled to call attention to the matter. If it be decided by Parliament that the Auditor General shall be the servant of members of Parliament individually, and shall decide what information may be given, who is going to decide what information he has no right to give? I maintain that there is certain information he is entitled to give to Parliament. He is the servant of Parliament and not of any individual member.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier's declaration that the Auditor General, a servant of Parliament, is not to be consulted by members of Parliament unless the Treasurer has first been approached, is amongst the most astounding I have ever listened to. The Minister has no control over the Auditor General, in fact, the Auditor General is set there to watch the Treasury and see that they conform with the laws of the land. It would be absurd to say that that officer comes under the direct control of the Minister he is set to watch. Mr. Toppin's office is open to the public, and any man is entitled to walk in and question Mr. Toppin on finance or any other matters in which he is concerned. Again, surely we can trust Mr. Toppin to say, when propriety demands it, "No, I cannot give you that information."

The PREMIER: When did you see Mr. Toppin; before you made your speech in the House?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think so.

The PREMIER: You made your speech on the same day as that on which Mr. Toppin's report was tabled, namely, the 12th January.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I went along and discussed with him the report on the State Steamship Service.

The Premier: Where did you get it?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: From the Table.

The Premier: It was only laid on the Table the day on which you made your speech.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If so, the Premier is convicted out of his own mouth; because it would then seem that I did not see the Auditor General until after I had made my speech. I do not remember the exact day on which I saw the Auditor General; until now I have accepted the Premier's word as to the date. The Premier accused me of first seeing the Auditor General and afterwards delivering that officer's sentiments in the House. That is what I hold to be most unfair.

The Minister for Works: I suppose you did not get the report before it was laid on the Table?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No.

Mr. Taylor: You had the report when you saw the Auditor General?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes. I remember, now, that the Colonial Secretary sent me a copy of the report to peruse.

The Premier: In advance of its being tabled here?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, he sent it to me confidentially. I rang him up and asked him if I could have a copy to peruse, and he sent it along to me. He said it was going to be tabled that afternoon.

The Minister for Mines: Well, that clears up the matter.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, I went to see the Auditor General in regard to this report. There are my figures written on the margin of the report.

Mr. James Gardiner: Was that report sent to you by Mr. Drew as confidential, and did you straightway go to the Auditor General on it?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, for an explanation. It was then on the Table of the House, and so was public property. What was wrong with that?

There are my own figures on the margin.

The Attorney General: You could have put those figures on it at any time since.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: What is the Attorney General insinuating? Let him ask the Auditor General if I had those figures on the report when I called on that officer. These papers were then on the Table, and at my request the Auditor General explained a somewhat ambiguous paragraph in the report.

Mr. Bolton: That was not on the Table when you went to the Auditor General.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes it was, because this is a copy which the member for Kimberley (Mr. Male) had made and sent down to me.

The Premier: Not the Auditor General's report?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, this was attached. Here is the report, and there are my figures. The clauses I could not quite understand are underlined. The only clauses I discussed with the Auditor General were those I have already mentioned.

Mr. Male: That was presented on the 10th December, 1914.

The Premier: No, the report you discussed was tabled on the 12th January, the day you made your speech.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Any information I got was obtained from the House and by courtesy of the Colonial Secretary. The report contained a paragraph which was somewhat misleading. On its reading I would have come to the House and accused the Government of utilising £14,000 or £15,000 of loan moneys which ought to have been debited to revenue. I could not reconcile it, so I called on the Auditor General and asked what was the meaning of the paragraph. He told me that my interpretation was wrong, and showed me how he arrived at it. It was an item which might have been charged to revenue expenditure, and which apparently has been charged to Loan Funds; that is all. I have been in the Auditor General's office not more than half a dozen times in the last 3½ years, but whenever I see anything published which I cannot quite grasp, I will ask

him for an explanation. I am entitled to do that without application to the Premier. I had the same bother once before when the Premier accused me of seeing the Under Treasurer. Why should I not?

The Premier: Because it was your own instruction that private members should not do so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Nothing of the sort. I never refused to allow any hon. member to interview any public servant. It would be childish and absurd. These responsible officers know exactly what information they may and may not give, and they are not likely to give away without reference to the Minister anything which should be withheld. Why, then, should it be necessary to wait for the Minister before asking for general information?

The Premier: It was your own provision.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No.

The Premier: Your instructions were that any information required on financial matters should be obtained through the Treasurer.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have no knowledge of any minute of the sort. It is the right of any taxpayer to ask these officers for certain information, and it is within the province of the officers to say "I can" or "I cannot give it to you." What I especially take exception to is the slur the Premier has cast on the Auditor General. Now he says he does not mean it as any charge against the Auditor General, and he agrees that the Auditor General is upright and straightforward. But that could not be said of the Auditor General if he had divulged to me, as leader of the Opposition and chief political opponent of the Premier, confidential information which I might use for political purposes. If the Auditor General, or any other public officer, has lost the confidence of Parliament, or of the Government, the Premier should bring a definite charge against him. But that is not the position in this case, and I resent the charge that the speech I made, and all the information I gave, were not my own, but the Auditor Gen-

eral's. The Premier said "The statements of the leader of the Opposition were not his own, but were in fact the Auditor General's." I resent that on behalf of the Auditor General. He gave me no information which he could not honourably give, and I have made no statements in the House—other than the quoting of extracts from his report—which can be said to have been supplied by the Auditor General. For my own part, I take all the responsibility of my utterances and my actions, but here is an officer who cannot protect himself and who is constantly accused of malpractice by my friends opposite, accused both indirectly and directly.

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: And I resent that accusation.

The Minister for Lands: I ask that the hon. member be requested to withdraw that statement.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is it not malpractice which he is accused of?

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to withdraw.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then I must withdraw it; but I would like the Premier to withdraw his remarks against the Auditor General, namely, that the statements of the leader of the Opposition were not his own, but were in fact the Auditor General's.

The Premier: You admit it yourself when you say you went to him for an explanation.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: This is childish. You stated, in effect, that the whole of my denunciation of your administration had emanated from the Auditor General. At all events that is the impression outside in consequence of what you said. The impression is that I am in league with the Auditor General and that he is bolstering me up with his special knowledge.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is the impression, and the Premier ought to withdraw what he said to give rise to it. Let him take the stigma off a gentleman who is honourably carrying out his duties.

The PREMIER: I made no charge

against the Auditor General. The statement I made has been proved by the leader of the Opposition himself.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You said he was not fair in his criticism and his actions.

The PREMIER: That is a different proposition altogether. I said the hon. member had been closeted with the Auditor General, and we were entitled to claim that the statements the hon. member made in regard to trading concerns represented the criticism, not of the leader of the Opposition, but of the Auditor General. The hon. member has admitted going to the Auditor General to have certain things cleared up. I have no wish to pursue the matter. I am merely pointing out the danger of the position.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The danger of Tammany Hall in your methods.

The PREMIER: My predecessor in the Treasury had issued instructions that no matters affecting the finances of the State were to be given to members except through the Minister. It came under my notice because, prior to the election in 1911, I applied to the Under Treasurer to be supplied with particulars of subsidies to municipalities and roads boards for the previous three years. I could have obtained the information from the public accounts. The reply I received was that the matter could be obtained on application to the Minister.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Did you get it?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It was the Under Treasurer's duty to supply it.

The PREMIER: He could not have done so under the instruction that had been issued.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I say he could have done so.

The PREMIER: We shall agree to differ, but I have seen the file containing the instruction. In regard to the Auditor General, I wish to point out the danger if such a practice is allowed to grow. I do not charge the Auditor General or the hon. member with having done anything suspicious, but I do charge the hon. member with introducing a dangerous practice.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You have charged him with fathering all my statements.

The PREMIER: The powers of the Auditor General are greater than those of a judge of the Supreme Court. A judge can only take evidence and investigate matters brought before him in proper order. The Auditor General may, by precept under his hand, require a person to appear before him and produce such statements, books, vouchers, and papers in his possession as appear to be necessary for the purpose of his examination. He may cause extracts to be taken from any book or record in any public office without the payment of fees, and may also administer an oath. The public could fairly become suspicious of the action of the Auditor General having all these powers if he were known to be privately closeted with an hon. member on financial matters. For his own protection he ought to refuse to do it. If a client in the Supreme Court were found closeted with the judge prior to the claim being heard, what would be said of such action? There is nothing in connection with the public accounts which I am not prepared to allow the hon. member to see at any moment he desires. The practice he has introduced, I maintain, is dangerous and I was entitled to direct attention to it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Not in the manner you did.

Item, Increases consequent upon the decisions of the Appeal Board dating from the 1st July, 1911, to the 30th June, 1915, £644:

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Will the Premier explain why these increases have been provided for the Audit Department and not for all branches of the service?

The PREMIER: The object is to obtain an expression of opinion from Parliament as to whether the increases should be paid. The Appeal Board heard the appeals of certain civil servants. When the board delivered their decisions, their responsibility ended and the Government's responsibility began. I would not mind if the matter stopped at the officers who were successful in their appeals, but we have already been flooded with cor-

respondence from those who did not appeal on the ground that certain of those who did appeal now rank senior to them.

Mr. Willmott: You have spoilt the uniformity of the Act.

The PREMIER: If we accept the decision of the Board and pay these increases we shall have to arrange for a complete reclassification of the whole service.

Mr. S. Stubbs: What expenditure would that mean?

The PREMIER: A fair amount; I am not in a position to say how much. I have no personal feeling in the matter; a majority of the officers I do not know, and I am unaware whether they are worth an increase. I am concerned only about the principle and where it will land the State if we accept it without question. I have a report from the Public Service Commissioner, which states—

In reply please see my memo. dated 14th December, 1914, hereunder and the schedule attached. 2. It is clear from the decisions of the Appeal Board that their opinion regarding the rates of pay which should prevail in the State service are in disagreement with the opinion of the Public Service Commissioner and his two assistants. 3. I would emphasise that it is a matter of opinion and as the Appeal Board, presided over by a judge of the Supreme Court, was brought into existence for the purpose of revising the opinion of the Commissioner and his assistants I presume its views must ultimately prevail. 4. On the 18th September, 1911, in my annual report to Parliament—made at the time an alteration in the personnel of the Appeal Board was being discussed—I remarked *inter alia* as follows:—"The State, producing at very considerable expense, a classification of its officers, through the agency of a board told off to entirely devote itself to, say, twelve months' study of the problem, should, I submit, consider very carefully before adopting a system whereby appeals, with final decision, will be permitted to be made to a tribunal having no such complete knowledge as

the Classification Board must necessarily have acquired. Decisions are more likely to be obtained under these circumstances by individual public servants, which would leave the classification as a whole illogical, and create a new cause of offence amongst those who do not appeal. No precedents can be found in Australia or, as far as I know, elsewhere, whereby a tribunal distinct from the classifier or classifiers hears and adjudicates on appeals against classification. This matter has been inquired into by the Under Secretary for Law." 5. On another occasion (15th August, 1913) after the Appeal Board had been altered and the first batch of appeals heard, my annual report to Parliament contained the following remarks:—"Necessity for amendment of Act—The simpler and more expeditious the ultimate system can be made, provided the reasonable requirements of the State and the service are not sacrificed, the better. It is not possible to represent the loss to the State, pecuniarily and otherwise, consequent on the presence from time to time at the court of a large number of public officials from heads of departments downwards, during the hearing of the appeals—

Public servants galore were present at the court.

Mr. Willmott: I worked it out, and I reckon the cost of that Appeal Board is in the neighbourhood of £10,000.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is about right. The Public Service Commissioner, quoting from his report of 1913, added—

Without a doubt some appeals lodged are purely speculative. They cost the appellants nothing. The State pays, and whilst not in any way desirous of commenting upon the Classification Appeal Board, I would point out that the average cost to date is approximately £30 per day; that the number of appeals heard is 36; that the board have sat 21½ days; that the average cost of hearing each appeal has been approximately £18; and that I consider further legislation is neces-

sary in the interests of the State, the service, and the Commissioner, before a satisfactory solution can be arrived at in connection with the system of appeal. In this connection the judicial opinions which have been expressed on the Public Service Act during the last few months must be beneficial as disclosing where clearer definitions and amendments are required. The present position is one which I respectfully suggest should not be allowed to continue much longer. It does not conduce to either efficient work in the departments, or to the welfare of the State; it is also extremely costly. A permanent board of three commissioners would be more economical."

6, A file has reached my hands to-day from the clerk in charge of records in the Mines Department, Mr. D'Arcy, and I beg you to read at least the opening paragraph of his memo. dated 7th inst. The opening paragraph I had better perhaps repeat here. It reads as follows:—"In view of the anomalies created by the decisions of the Appeal Board, I have the honour to apply for a reclassification of my position. Of course I had my opportunity before the board the same as the other appellants, but it must be admitted that there was a good deal of luck, good and bad, in the proceedings inasmuch as the appeals were decided merely upon the evidence put before the board, and without any inside knowledge of the relative values of positions, and while some officers were fortunate in that they were able to obtain valuable witnesses and favourable comparisons, others, though perhaps more deserving and really having better grounds for appeal, were not so favourably situated." 7, This letter was addressed to the Under Secretary for Mines, who forwarded it to the Public Service Commissioner with a covering minute in support, dated 11th inst., which reads as follows:—"I presume you will take into consideration the anomalies created by the decisions of the Appeal Board, and I submit that the attached application by Mr. D'Arcy is

worthy of every consideration. I can see no reason whatever for assigning a lower classification to the position in this department as compared with the Crown Law."

The Minister for Mines says that is quite right, and that Mr. D'Arcy is considered the best record clerk in the service. The Commissioner continued—

8, May I suggest that there is a streak of humour to be found in the fact that whilst the Public Service Commissioner was not deemed suitable to sit on the Appeal Board, the Appeal Board having delivered its decision is now looked upon as a suitable body to be over-ruled by the Public Service Commissioner. 9, This letter from Mr. D'Arcy affords a practical example of what we may expect to happen.

It has happened since in connection with nearly every department. Mr. D'Arcy merely took the initiative. The Commissioner added—

10, If the whole service were reclassified on the basis of the decisions given by the Appeal Board a large additional vote for salaries would be the result. 11, If it is not reclassified then many anomalies will exist and some men will have attained a seniority over their fellow officers which may have an important bearing on their future career, giving them an advantage not only at the present moment so far as the money is concerned, but in the future as regards promotion.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Who created the Appeal Board?

The PREMIER: I am not dealing with that matter now. The hon. member's party in another place, who are supposed to prevent the passing of hasty legislation, agreed to it. The Public Service Commissioner continued—

12, My objections to the decisions of the Appeal Board are not of a financial nature as I realise Parliament has relieved me of that responsibility by casting it on the Appeal Board. My objections lie principally on two grounds, viz. (a) the destruction of uniformity of pay. (b) the deprivation of seniority from men who did not

appeal. 13, I have never been able to abandon my view that appeals from individual civil servants should not be dealt with without considering their effect on the rest of the staff. This, however, the Appeal Board has clearly done. 14, Unless you had asked for these remarks I should not have considered it seemly to have offered them, as I realise I am criticising a board from which I have been removed, and it is very easy under such circumstances to be accused of doing so from unworthy motives. I have, however, no feelings whatever in the matter, because, as I have said before, the fixing of a salary for services rendered is a matter of opinion, but whilst, therefore, I do not wish to criticise the amounts assessed by my superior authority, namely, the Appeal Board, I am at liberty to point out how their decisions affect others who did not appeal, and I have no hesitation in saying that many officers have been deprived of their seniority (an important asset) by reason of the appeal board altering slightly the maximum value of a position, and this does not seem fair to the officers who did not appeal.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Did the Government acknowledge the appeal and place these men in the positions the board gave them?

The PREMIER: We have not done anything yet. We have taken no action in the matter. In my opinion Mr. D'Arcy has put the position as clearly as it could be put to be understood, namely, that the decision of the Appeal Court has made it such that if a reclassification were to take place to-morrow under the same conditions as exist to-day every man in the public service would, for his own protection, be compelled to appear because the Appeal Court merely takes into account the value of the evidence submitted and not the value of the work performed by the applicant.

Mr. Robinson: Was the Public Service Commissioner represented at the Appeal Court?

The PREMIER: The Assistant Public Service Commissioner was there and was heard.

Mr. Robinson: Was he heard in each instance?

The PREMIER: Yes, in each instance.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Did he bring these matters before the board?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Willmott: The trouble is that the commissioners classified the position, but the court classified the man.

The PREMIER: That is not right. They may in their decisions have meant that, and I believe that was the position. As a matter of fact, under the law they were not entitled to do so. Under the decision arrived at by Parliament in the Act, they were only entitled to classify the position. I believe the board were influenced to some extent in saying that the amount that a man was getting was not the amount he should be getting in view of the fact that he has served 10 or 15 years in the service. I believe that mention was made by the Court as to men having been so long in the service. They have not the power of saying that a man should get £216 a year owing to his having been a long time in the service, but they say that this man's position is worth from £216 a year upwards, and that he should be getting this salary. The very thing I protested against when the Act was before Parliament was that we had no right to hand over to anybody the responsibility of fixing the individual salary of any officer, and I say we have not that right. The whole procedure in departments affected by an Arbitration Act or wages board in any part of the world is that the men collectively are performing a certain class of work and power is given to arrive at a decision affecting the whole of them from the minimum and maximum point of view. In this case we leave the Court to decide the question as to whether the classification is a fair and reasonable one for the class of work that the individual is called upon to do. Mr. D'Arcy says that certain public officials were able to appear before the Appeal Board and were also able to bring before that board excellent

witnesses. There is one case in this connection, where the permanent head came along and said that the person who was appealing "is entitled to receive something more because he does most of my work"—and he got his rise.

Mr. James Gardiner: What about the permanent head?

The PREMIER: There are altogether too many anomalies in the service. It is not so much the individual. Who is going to decide whether a draughtsman as an individual is worth a certain sum more than he is actually drawing? I am prepared to say that the Board may, by hearing evidence and drawing a contrast between the work this man is called upon to perform and the work performed by similar men in private firms or companies, and a contract between the salaries paid to each, decide what salary this person is entitled to draw when employed in the public service. If this is going to apply it should apply to the whole of the draughtsmen, and not to one individual who brings along evidence to show that he is doing something which should be done by some one else.

Hon. Frank Wilson: There are lots of grades.

The PREMIER: There are more now. The persons who are getting the increases are nearly all highly paid officials, men who are getting from £500 a year to £800, whereas some poor beggars who have been working for years on the lowest rungs and who expected to be put up in salary—and one could not object to this—are to get nothing. This makes the position more intolerable than it was previously. There are 63 officers who had increases granted by the Appeal Board, but this does not cover anything like all of those who appealed. The increases to these 63 officers involve some £4,000 which we have to pay as from 1911. In one case a successful appellant only joined the service immediately preceding that year. He was offered a salary which he accepted, because he recognised that in the circumstances in which he found himself it was a good salary. Since that date changes have taken place, during the last 12 months, and he now

holds a more responsible position. He has been reclassified and we have to pay him the increase from 1911. These are some of the difficulties we are faced with.

Mr. Robinson: Why did not the commissioner put that before the Appeal Board?

The PREMIER: The Appeal Board was made up largely of public servants, all of whom were looking for increases.

Mr. WILLMOTT: You appointed that court yourself.

The PREMIER: We appointed one member of it, and the service appointed one.

Mr. Willmott: You appoint the judge.

The PREMIER: The judge is appointed by the Chief Justice and a judge of the Supreme Court is accepted. There is no objection on that ground.

Mr. Willmott: How can you go back on the decisions of that board?

The PREMIER: It is not a matter of going back. What I am nervous about is how I am going forward. I am quite prepared to go back. It means that if we adopt these decisions we must reclassify the whole service. If we enjoyed normal conditions and the finances of the State would permit, I should accept these without hesitation and have a reclassification of the service in order to protect those who did not appeal. The time, however, is not yet ripe for such reclassification.

Mr. S. Stubbs: What do you suggest?

The PREMIER: I suggest that the matter should be deferred, and when we reach normal conditions, if Parliament is prepared to do so, we will go into the question of a reclassification to adjust the anomalies which have been created. It is not fair to pay this money and allow these anomalies to continue.

Mr. Robinson: How long would a reclassification take?

The PREMIER: I think at least 12 months.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What position will you be in then?

The PREMIER: We shall then be able to adjust matters.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Anomalies will still exist.

The PREMIER: Not to the same extent. The hon. member was responsible for the appointment of the classification board. It consisted of the Public Service Commissioner, the Under Secretary for Mines (Mr. H. S. King), and a man from outside the service was appointed in the person of Mr. W. W. Aleock. These three gentlemen went right through the department, and taking everything into consideration, I think they made a wonderful list of it. They had to re-classify every office, and every individual occupier of such offices, and, as I say, did wonderfully well. In order to prevent anomalies we shall require in the near future to make a reclassification of the service, and to protect the interests of such men as Mr. D'Arcy and others, and to place every man on the same footing, but we cannot under present conditions do this.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Does that mean putting aside permanently these appeals?

The PREMIER: No, not permanently; it is only a question of deferring them.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why defer them? Why not square up the appeals?

The PREMIER: As soon as we do that we create all these anomalies.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You have anomalies now.

The PREMIER: We can allow these conditions to remain for the time being. As soon as we are in a position to face these responsibilities—and we have also other responsibilities to face—we must arrange for a reclassification and adjust the anomalies created under the appeal.

Mr. Robinson: Would not these men in the service still have the right of appeal?

The PREMIER: It would be a matter for Parliament to decide.

Mr. Robinson: Would it not be advisable to consider whether you should not appoint permanent commissioners. do away with the old appeals, and make the decisions final?

The PREMIER: That would be a reclassification. I am prepared to say we

have got to consider the question, but we cannot consider it now.

Mr. Robinson: Why?

The PREMIER: As far as the Government or myself are concerned, we have no desire to repudiate our responsibilities. In these times we are not entitled to pay these increases and create anomalies, but when things are normal I believe Parliament can be trusted to see that these anomalies are adjusted and that a reclassification of the service is made. It is felt in some quarters that some of the officers who appealed have been treated differently from other officers since 1911, and have received no increases during the hearing of their appeals. As a matter of fact, these 63 officers who were successful in their appeal have received increases between them of £1,648 a year. They, therefore, have not been entirely overlooked.

Mr. Robinson: Are these increases included in the findings of the board?

The PREMIER: This represents an increase per officer of £26 a year. In the circumstances, therefore, they have been treated just the same as the rest of the service. It is surely not too much to ask these officers to permit this matter to be deferred in order that it may be adjusted by a reclassification when we again meet normal times.

Mr. Willmott: I cannot see how you are going to get over the fact that you are in honour bound to pay these increases in spite of any reclassification which you bring about at some future date.

The PREMIER: I think, legally, they can compel us to pay.

Mr. Willmott: Any one of these men can sue the Government.

The PREMIER: I believe they can sue for recovery. I am not going to discourage them if they desire to do so.

Mr. Willmott: You distinctly stated that the decisions of the court shall be final.

The PREMIER: That is so. They are final. We are not setting them aside. I am merely asking Parliament to say that under the conditions prevailing at the moment we should not give effect just

now to these decisions, but should defer them, and in the meantime consider, in order to prevent these anomalies coming into existence, the question of a reclassification of the whole of the service. The question is not merely the £4,000. The real question is as to the conditions which will prevail if effort is given to the recommendations. I am ready to listen to any hon. member prepared to tell me how the recommendations can be carried into effect without giving rise to even greater anomalies than exist at present. In the circumstances, I consider, the officers ought to agree to the delay which the Government have suggested.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The question is certainly complicated, and difficult to decide. While recognising that fresh anomalies will be created if the recommendations are carried out, yet I cannot lose sight of the fact that Parliament created the Appeal Board.

Mr. Bolton: Some of the officers, on account of the war, withdrew their appeals.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That does not affect the recommendations or verdicts of the board. Is Parliament to refuse to pay those verdicts because of some difficulty which may arise from doing so, or because the effect may be to induce other civil servants to desire reclassification? Let us pay the amounts, and have another re-classification as soon as practicable. I would honour the verdict whether right or wrong.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Parliament having given public servants the right of appeal, we must accept the responsibility. We should not repudiate the decisions of the Appeal Board because in our opinion that board has not worked well.

The Premier: I am not repudiating them. I have told you that already.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I say, Parliament must not repudiate them. Any Appeal Board's decisions must necessarily result in anomalies, because one officer doing a certain class of work appeals, whilst another doing exactly the same class of work does not appeal.

The Minister for Mines: Personally, I consider that a public service board of

three commissioners would prove the most satisfactory tribunal.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: There is no use in paying these advances, then having another reclassification board, and then an appeal board again, and so on endlessly. The suggestion of the Minister for Mines appears to me to be right. Of course, no one could tolerate the Public Service Commissioner himself forming the appeal board.

The Minister for Mines: It would not be fair to ask the Public Service to abide by the decision of one commissioner without appeal, but three commissioners would be fair.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes. Formerly the appeal was from the Public Service Commissioner to the Public Service Commissioner. Until the necessary alteration is made in the Public Service Act, we shall always come back to the same thing. My Ministerial experience leads me to agree with the leader of the Opposition that Parliament must honour the verdicts which have been given.

The Minister for Works: But further anomalies would result. Some officers withdrew their appeals on account of the stress of the times.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: But I believe the majority of these appeals were heard prior to the declaration of war.

Mr. FOLEY: I intend to move a reduction of this item. Of course, I do not for one moment believe that the Government would repudiate their agreement to abide by the award of the board. These Public Service appeals, however, are not parallel with appeals to the Arbitration Act. Besides, there is the fact that numerous public servants withdrew their appeals on account of stress of times; and those public servants thus forfeited their chances of obtaining grades secured by other officers, who persisted in their appeals. If the Appeal Board, whether created by the present or by any other Government, proved a failure, I would admit the fact and get something else in its place. One important point is that the qualifications of the man filling the position at the present time weighed more

with the Appeal Board than did the value of the position itself.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. FOLEY: Before tea, I expressed the opinion that the Civil Service Appeal Board is entirely different from the procedure in the Arbitration Court. To take an illustration with which I am familiar. In mining, when the Arbitration Court is adjudicating on any question pertaining to mining, the court does not take into consideration in any way the man affected, but grades the employment the man is following, whether the work is worth more in a drive or shaft than in an ordinary end. And the court sets out specifically the rate of wages to be paid for each kind of work. The fault I find with civil service appeals is that in almost every instance the men, and not the position, have been graded. The appellants have called witnesses, sometimes legal gentlemen, to support their appeal, and almost invariably the evidence of such outside witnesses has been, not that the position was worth so much, but that the officer was worth more than he was receiving. I have no wish to lead the House into believing that I am in favour of repudiating anything in the nature of an arbitration court award. I move—

That the item be reduced by £600. I do that because there is a difference of opinion whether, if the item be deleted altogether, the Government would not be repudiating the claim of these men. Leaving the amount at £44 will not make any difference.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It will commit the Government to paying.

Mr. FOLEY: It will not. Supposing the item were deleted altogether, the Treasurer could still, if he chose, pay the item from the Treasurer's Advance Account. I do not believe the present Treasurer would repudiate it.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: Why not leave the item in, then?

Mr. FOLEY: I would suggest to the Government that during recess they should formulate a scheme of reclassifi-

cation which Parliament could discuss next session, with a view to bringing about a better classification than at present exists. Hon. members have suggested that a board of three commissioners would be satisfactory. I believe that if there were three commissioners, whose decisions were final, the position would be more satisfactory than the present arrangement, under which, when an award on appeal gives something to one officer, discontent is created amongst other officers.

Mr. ROBINSON: If the motion be carried, it will tie the hands of the Government in their relations with the civil service, and the position in that direction is at present sufficiently complicated. The item is quite a small one, and I do not think the Government's hands should be tied. Rightly or wrongly, the law of this country has given civil servants a right of appeal, and some of them have exercised the privilege; the decisions have been given, and whether we like those decisions or not, it is the duty of the Government to honour them. If, after the money has been paid, something further is considered desirable, in order to remove the anomalies referred to by the Premier, the suggestion put forward by the member for Leonora is a good one—to appoint three commissioners whose decision shall be final and not subject to appeal. If there were three commissioners, drawn either from different positions in the service, or even some of them from without, they could, if they were independent men, put the service in such a state that the Government of the day would have less trouble in respect of classification than they have now.

The Minister for Works: That was done four years ago.

Mr. ROBINSON: I would not stop at having done it four years ago. If the Government do not pay the extra emoluments awarded to the civil servants, it will create considerable discontent.

The Minister for Mines: If we do pay it will create discontent.

Mr. ROBINSON: If, by paying, discontent is created amongst other officers, I would answer that by regrading and

reclassifying the service by three permanent impartial men. We cannot get away from the responsibility of an award issued by a tribunal which Parliament itself has set up. There is only one set of conditions under which I think a civil servant is not entitled to be paid, that is when the Government has not a shot left in the locker. We have not come to that position yet; there are many items on these Estimates which might be done away with before we cut down the civil service.

Mr. TAYLOR: I want to be certain of the position. If the hon. member achieves his object to strike out the amount that will not relieve the Government of their obligation. The Government owe these people certain emoluments which the court decided they should have. The court was created by the Government, and I would like to know whether it was necessary for the Government to put that item on this particular part of the Estimates, or whether it could not have been put somewhere else. I think the Government put it there for the purpose of permitting the Committee to discuss the position of the civil service or that of the court which granted the emoluments. We must respect the decision of that court. We created it, and gave it full power to reclassify the service. A section of the service availed themselves of the opportunity to appeal, and in so doing made themselves somewhat objectionable to the system of government, and those who did not avail themselves of the opportunity of appealing, after the success of the adventurers who did appeal, have now inundated the Government with requests for the reclassification of their positions. Anything that this Parliament may do cannot relieve the Government of their obligations to meet the liabilities imposed upon them by the court, whether rightly or wrongly imposed. If, in our opinion, the court is incapable of handling the appeals, it is our duty to amend the Act under which that court was appointed. The mere striking out of the item will not relieve the Government of their obligation.

Mr. BOLTON: I should be sorry to advocate the repudiation by the Government of the decisions of the Appeal Court. At the same time I am going to vote for the deletion of the item. I disagree with the member for Canning, who said that the amount was placed on the Estimates to adjust anomalies that had been created by the Appeal Court.

Mr. Robinson: That is what the item says.

Mr. BOLTON: I rather believe that the Government placed the item on the Estimates so as to give members an opportunity of expressing their opinion as to whether anomalies exist. If they do exist, the only way to wipe them out is to have a reclassification. The member for Canning said that only a section of the service appealed. I would remind him that many members of the service appealed and others who appealed withdrew those appeals when the present trouble under which we are suffering made its appearance. When a member of the service does not appeal it is naturally concluded that he is satisfied with his position, but the Appeal Court in this instance created anomalies by appointing to senior positions men who previously occupied posts inferior to those held by members of the service who had no reason to appeal. Had they known what the court proposed doing they, too, would most certainly have appealed. I am speaking with a knowledge of appeal courts, for some 13 years ago the then Minister for Railways, the late Mr. Piesse, decided that the railway employees should have a classification, and a court was appointed to hear the appeals. I had the honour of being appointed to represent the men. Mr. Triggs, who now holds a high official position in New Zealand, and who was then in the railway service, was appointed to represent the Government, and Mr. Fairbairn was the chairman. That classification took over 12 months to carry out, although the hearing of the appeals only took one month.

Mr. Taylor: How many men were involved?

Mr. BOLTON: Approximately 630. The appeals were invited to be sent in by

a certain day and 97 were received. The classification which was issued has been going on for 13 years, and there has never been one complaint. Every man in the service, driver, fireman, or cleaner had his number on that classification list, and I, although I have been out of the service now for 11 years, occupied the position of No. 14 on it. As vacancies occurred, so the men were moved up in order of seniority. If the suggestion of the Premier be carried out, that a reclassification be made, with one final appeal we shall have finality. We must have finality. We know that certain members of the service have won their appeals, and we know too that some have approached members of this Chamber. I think one of them at least is known to most members. Why should a man who has been in the service for less than three years, having started in an inferior grade, be classified to fill a senior position over the heads of others with many years' service and a better record of service to their credit? If we expect members of the service to accept classifications of that kind, then we shall expect something which is against human nature. The mere fact that some won their appeals and others withdrew their appeals on account of the war, has led to anomalies being created, and has given rise to more dissatisfaction than ever existed before the appointment of the Appeal Court. There was less dissatisfaction then than there exists to-day. The only solution of the whole difficulty is to wipe out the whole thing, and to give a definite promise that there will be a reclassification, and that an Appeal Board will be appointed. In that way we shall get finality.

Mr. Smith: We have had an Appeal Court properly constituted, and you will not abide by its decisions; what guarantee have we that the decisions of any other will be respected?

Mr. Taylor: Was not what you suggest the idea when the existing Appeal Court was appointed?

Mr. BOLTON: I think not.

Mr. Taylor: When we appointed that court it was understood that we were going to honour its decisions.

Mr. BOLTON: The only member I have heard say that we are going to repudiate that court's decisions is the member for Mount Margaret.

Mr. Taylor: I am not saying that.

Mr. BOLTON: It is impossible to adopt a classification and then have appeals afterwards, because in that way we shall never have finality. The better way is to wipe out the whole thing, allow a reclassification to take place, and an appeal board to be constituted, and then after the appeals have been heard, the classification can be adopted. Once we adopt that classification every member of the service will know his position, and every one who joins in the future will also know his position, and we shall not experience the difficulties which exist now.

Mr. CARPENTER: The hon. member has missed the point. To wipe out the item means repudiation. Parliament passed an Act and created an appeal board, the board granted certain increases, and Parliament is now being asked to set aside, or at least, defer, those increases. The question is, would we not be repudiating by deferring? It is very near to repudiation, at all events. For the honour of Parliament and of the Government, no matter how much we may be surprised at the action of the board, there is only one honourable thing to do, namely, to carry out the decisions of the board we have set up. We cannot escape the obligations the appeal board has cast upon us.

The PREMIER: It is not suggested that we should repudiate our obligation to pay the increases. We recognise that we must pay this amount, and we will pay it. It is not the money value of the decisions which I am worrying about. The £4,000 is nothing.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: What does it represent?

The PREMIER: Back money due to them to, I think, the 1st December.

Mr. James Gardiner: Does that include the whole reclassification?

The PREMIER: No: it includes the total amount we have to pay in lump sums to successful appellants by way of arrears from 1911. But if we pay that money without first arranging with the successful

appellants to allow the other matters to remain in abeyance, we will bring about an impossible state of chaos. The point is, that the board's decisions in the aggregate represent, not £4,000, but perhaps as much as £40,000; because if I pay 63 officers that £4,000 all the others in the service, to the number of 630, will be just as much entitled to increases as are the successful appellants. So the position is that, while we are prepared to pay the £4,000 back money, yet in order to prevent anomalies arising we say that the other matters should be allowed to remain in abeyance, in return for which we will undertake to consider the question of amending the Public Service Act and bringing about a new and final reclassification. Before such reclassification can be adopted it is essential that officers should make their appeals. Only by these means can anomalies be obviated.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Did not all the officers have the same opportunity of appealing?

The PREMIER: Yes; but some of them, recognising the difficulties confronting the State, declined to appeal, and I am certainly not going to allow those officers to suffer by their patriotic action.

Mr. Willmott: Does the Premier mean that if a new reclassification is made it will be final?

The PREMIER: I say that before any such reclassification is finally adopted, all the appeals should be heard and disposed of.

Mr. Willmott: But the reclassification must be amended from time to time.

The PREMIER: Of course. For instance, we could so alter the duties of an officer as to call for a reclassification of his post. Under normal conditions we would adjust the existing anomalies, but, as things are, the better way will be to let our obligations end at the amount involved in the board's decisions. We cannot undertake a reclassification at this stage, at least not if we are to have any regard for economy. We will meet the £4,000 obligation, but we are not going to commit ourselves to anything further. We

must pay the £4,000, but we must also prevent anomalies from arising until we can readjust these matters and bring about a reclassification in a proper manner instead of having to provide something like £40,000 forthwith.

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

Ayes	22
Noes	17

Majority for .. 5

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullaney
Mr. Boltou	Mr. Muusle
Mr. Collier	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Foley	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. McDowall	Mr. Heltmann
	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Smith
Mr. Connolly	Mr. S. Stubbs
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Toomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Nairn	Mr. Male
Mr. Plesse	(Teller).

Amendment thus passed.

The PREMIER: I wish members fairly to understand the attitude the Government propose to adopt. The effect of the amendment, I take it, is that Parliament considers the amount involved in the decision of the board should be paid. We undertake to pay that sum this year.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Right away?

The PREMIER: Yes, the total amount involved to date so far as cash is concerned, but we are not prepared to consider the anomalies which exist by recognising the matters of seniority, etc. If the total vote had been passed, I should have considered it necessary to adjust all the anomalies consequent on the appeals. Under the circumstances I am prepared to pay the £4,000 involved, but the other anomalies will have to

stand over until the reclassification of the service is carried out.

Hon. Frank Wilson: If I had known that I would have voted with you.

The Attorney General: The Premier has been telling you that all night.

Vote (as reduced to £9,250) put and passed.

Vote—*Compassionate allowances, etc.*, £1,662—agreed to.

Vote—*Government^c Motor Car Service*, £2,042:

Item, Wages and overtime, £900:

Mr. ROBINSON: If the whole of the items relating to motor cars appeared in this division, and amounted to only a couple of thousand pounds, I would not perhaps raise any query, but right through the Estimates, motor cars are buried in the débris of incidentals and other expenses.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They are using motor cars on sheep stations now.

Mr. ROBINSON: I would like to know how many motor cars the Government possess, how many branches of the service are supplied with motor cars, how many motor cars are available for Ministerial use, what is the meaning of the item, "wages and overtime," what wages and overtime are paid, and is overtime being paid at present?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with one item at a time.

Mr. ROBINSON: The first item will be sufficient.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can speak generally on every department but not on every division.

Mr. ROBINSON: This division has grown so much that I thought it was a department.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The division shows a decrease of £1,700.

Mr. ROBINSON: Apparently a little less is to be expended in wages and overtime.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: That is only an estimate.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Auditor General, on page 66 of the second part of his report, stated—

Item 2, for "General working expenses" under the subdivision on the Estimates for "Government motor cars" has been charged with the cost of hiring cars. It is stated that it is intended to amend the Estimates for the current year so as to make provision for this class of expenditure. The revenue derived from the Government motor car division of the service is at the expense of other votes, the practice being to recharge the votes of departments which use the Government cars and treat the amount as revenue. Although a separate division appears for "Government Motor Cars" on the Estimates this heading does not provide for all those used for State purposes. Some departments charge their own votes direct, both with purchases and running expenses.

This bears out my remark that right through the Estimates items appear for motor cars, accessories, hire, and so on. I would like a comprehensive statement of what the motor car service costs the Government.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Is not it useful?

Mr. ROBINSON: Yes, but that is no reason why my questions should not be answered. The answers might be most satisfactory.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is astounded because the Government, having inspectors of all descriptions travelling from the North-West almost to Esperance, doing all sorts of Government business and never in one town on two consecutive nights are using motor cars. Probably he would prefer that we should use horses, even at the present price of fodder. It suits the hon. member's business very well to have a motor car. His business is nothing in comparison to the business of the Government.

Mr. Robinson: I do not object to your having motor cars.

The PREMIER: We use the motor cars for the purpose of Government

business, but the cars controlled by the Government service are not all provided for under this vote. The cars provided for here are not specially retained for any particular purpose. Those provided for the various departments are purchased and maintained for the use of the officials of those departments. There are, for instance, the inspectors in the Water Supply Department, the Agricultural Department, the Lands and the Police Departments.

Mr. Robinson: What are the cars included in this vote?

The PREMIER: Where officers are on specific work and are travelling for the purpose of carrying out their duties, they are provided with a motor car. Those officers who are not travelling regularly, such as the Fruit Commissioner, the Commissioner for the South West, the inspectors of the Public Works Department, our engineers, the inspectors of the Education Department and the Charities Department, who are established in the City, can get a motor car when necessary from the garage established under the Works Department. This means efficiency, and a saving of time and money. Exception has been taken to Ministers using motor cars for the transaction of the country's business.

Mr. Robinson: Not at all.

The PREMIER: At all events, this appears to rankle in the minds of some hon. members. I do not mind what the public have to say in the matter, for whilst I am holding my present position, one which requires more control than any other business in the State, I think I am entitled to the use of a motor car for the transaction of that business, and that other Ministers are also entitled to the use of one. We have now four men engaged in the Government garage; one of them being employed particularly to carry out repairs which are of a nature that would not cause the detention of the car for any long period. The wages and overtime were for services rendered before the war. Under existing conditions we do not pay any definite overtime out of the public funds, and yet no complaints are made from the men with

regard to the treatment they receive. The matter raised by the Auditor General is a small one, after all. There are occasions when it is essential that the Government should hire a motor car. If a Minister is suddenly called upon to transact some public business, which requires to be done hurriedly and a Government car is not available, it pays the country to provide a car for this purpose. We have now provided a special vote for motor car hiring when a Government car is not available, and I do not think there is much to complain about.

Mr. Robinson: This item under general expenses, £1,970, is a big amount. How is it made up?

The PREMIER: It is made up in the upkeep of the cars as well as the running of them.

Mr. Robinson: Is that the upkeep of all the cars?

The PREMIER: All the cars that are stabled in the Government garage, and there are four of these.

Mr. Robinson: The expenses surely do not amount to £500 a car.

The PREMIER: It includes the hire of additional cars, if necessary; also repairs not only to these cars but to departmental cars stabled in the garage. The cost of upkeep of the two departmental cars stabled in the garage; and generally all costs against the operations of these four cars. The expenditure is carefully watched and we have an officer of the Treasury to see that the accounts are kept correctly. The expenses are kept down within reasonable limits, taking into account the Government business.

Mr. Robinson: I see that at the end of the schedule you take credit for the amount charged to other departments, namely £1,800.

The PREMIER: This is the amount recovered from other departments for Government running of cars housed in the Government garage. This £1,800 is earned by the four men employed there by running cars for other departments, and those earnings will probably be ex-

ceeded. The £3,800 also includes the purchase of a car.

Mr. Smith: Would not a less expensive car do?

The PREMIER: Any old thing would be good enough for the Government, of course. I do not know whether a less expensive car would, in the long run, prove any less expensive. Our cars working for the Government, outside Ministerial running, earned £1,800. If cars were hired privately for the use of departments they would cost very much more than if the Government cars were used. There is no car specially told off to any particular Minister. The only difference between the present Government and their predecessors was this—

Mr. Robinson: That they only had one car.

The PREMIER: That is not correct.

Mr. Robinson: That is what they tell me.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is a young Liberal; he is only learning.

Mr. Robinson: They tell me they only had one car, and a bad one at that.

The PREMIER: They had two cars which were for Ministers' own use and not for departmental running at all.

Hon. Frank Wilson: There was a car which would not negotiate the hill up to Parliament House.

The PREMIER: That was the sort of car the Liberal Government bought. That is accepting the advice of the hon. member for North Perth.

Mr. Robinson: I understand the car was exactly of the same make as one used by the Premier, and that the reason for its being out of order was that it turned upside down on one occasion.

The PREMIER: Under the previous Administration the expenditure on motor cars was covered up and did not appear on the Estimates, although two Ministers had two cars kept specially for their requirements.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are wrong.

The PREMIER: The Minister for Works had a car and the Premier had a car, for their own use, and there was no departmental running at that time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The cars were used by officers of departments.

The PREMIER: Under the present system every car mileage is shown. There are days in the week when all our cars are kept going at their hardest on departmental running and they are doing better work than they have ever done previously. The expenditure connected with Government cars and the work they perform are open to the public view. If I feel disposed to take a run out in a car for half an hour, to get a little fresh air, as a break from my office work, I propose to do it. It is not asking too much to request the public to provide these facilities to enable me to carry out my public duties. With regard to the earnings from departmental running, I do not think the £1,800 covers all the costs. Detention fees are not charged in respect of the Government cars. I contend we have effected great economies in introducing the use of cars for highly-paid officials.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not satisfied with the Premier's explanation. The hon. gentleman is absolutely wrong in stating that the Liberal Government kept two special cars for the exclusive use of two Ministers. The members of this Committee are entitled to protest against an item of this size at such a time of stress, when wages men are being cut down. Does the Premier's reference to overtime of the chauffeurs mean that officials are carted about after hours? The item itself means that each of the Ministers is costing the country £600 per annum for a motor car. The Premier should give the information asked for, and give it clearly. In any case, the country has not now money to burn. The item must include a good deal of overtime. When is that overtime earned?

The Premier: No overtime is being paid at present.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The statements of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) must not go uncontradicted, more especially his assertion that each of the Ministers costs the country £600 per annum for a motor car. Not even the Premier's motor is kept

exclusively for the leader of the Government. Ministerial cars are frequently used by public servants. I may mention especially the Fruit Industries Commissioner and the Agricultural Commissioner for the South-West, who are facilitated in the delivery of lectures in the country thanks to the use of these cars. When the present Government took office, there was a special car for the former Premier and another special car for the former Minister for Works. The present Premier altered the system so as to render the cars available for the use of officials, instead of cars being hired for them. The cost of that car hire was covered up in the accounts. Again, under the previous Administration, motor cars were frequently hired for distinguished visitors. The statements of the member for Northam are made for a political purpose, and in the knowledge that they are incorrect.

Mr. ALLEN: It is all very well for the Premier and the Minister for Works to try to throw dust in the eyes of the Committee; but we can effect a saving in this item, and we ought to do it. One cannot walk about the City without the risk of being run down at every street corner by a Minister in a motor car. On this, as on previous occasions, Ministers are not prepared to accept suggestions for economy which affect themselves.

Item, Purchase of car and accessories, including freight, insurance, etc., £935:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Regarding this item, I wish to point out that this car was landed here some time in September or October last, when the Premier knew that the country was not in a position to buy new motor cars. In any case, why does not the Premier buy a Ford car for City work, instead of such an expensive car as this?

The Minister for Lands: This car is intended for country work.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We are only doing our duty in protesting against unwarranted expenditure of this kind.

The PREMIER: I suppose one should not expect the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) to know that one buys a motor to arrive—that cars are not

sent out on spec. This particular car was purchased in June, prior to the declaration of war.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It was not needed, anyhow.

The PREMIER: The car was and is needed. Besides, I could not go back on my legal obligation.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Government Savings Bank*, £24,048:

Item, Commissions payable to agents, etc., £5,000:

Mr. FOLEY: Did I understand from the Premier, when the hon. gentleman was speaking generally on the Estimates, that it is his intention to do away with agencies held by the Associated Banks?

The PREMIER: I have asked the manager of our Savings Bank to abolish those agencies. Inquiry has led me to conclude that our Savings Bank agencies would be better carried on by firms other than private banks.

Mr. FOLEY: I am glad to have that information from the Premier. I know for a fact that some chartered banks holding the Government agency harassed the depositors with the object of getting them to transfer their business from the Savings Bank to the chartered bank. If complaint is made it is only a matter of one of their officials denying the charge. Banks doing the State business should attend to that business alone, and not tout for the Savings Bank business. My informant in this matter is prepared to substantiate what he has said and I hope that, in the event of a substantiated case being brought to the Premier's notice, the chartered bank shown to have attempted to get the business of the State bank will not be allowed to handle the Savings Bank business longer.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I doubt whether the statement made that private banks doing the State Savings Bank business have made an effort to capture that business can be substantiated. The secrecy with which banking business is done is well known. Some members are too fond of making complaints against the private banks.

Mr. FOLEY: On the goldfields every man working in a mine is regarded by certain officials of the State, for instance the officials of the Police Department, practically as a criminal. If a working miner does prospecting off shift and samples his stuff at home, the mere sound of a pestle and mortar at his place is considered evidence sufficient to justify the police in that district in questioning him on suspicion of having gold illegally in his possession. Possibly the next move the police might take would be to go to the banks and find out how much money such a man has in the bank. My point is that a chartered bank conducting the State Savings bank business may not exercise that secrecy which should be exercised in a Savings Bank.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Government Stores, £11,445*—agreed to.

Vote—*Indenting Office, £3,926*:

The CHAIRMAN: This is an item, not a vote, the expenditure being chargeable to the various departments.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Literary and Scientific Grants, £10,950*:

Item, The Public Library of Western Australia, £3,000:

Mr. FOLEY: As a member representing other than a metropolitan seat, I wish to enter an emphatic protest against so much money being spent in this direction in the metropolitan area, when it is remembered that libraries outside the metropolitan area have had their subsidies cut down to diminishing point.

The Premier: We have reduced the grant this year.

Mr. FOLEY: I know; but the subsidy to the library in my own district has been reduced altogether.

The Premier: Perhaps it all went in salary.

Mr. FOLEY: The only salary paid in connection with the library at Leonora was 10s. per week to a young lady for looking after the library in the evening; a committee of the subscribers did that work in the other hours of the day. There is too much cutting down of libraries in the out-back centres. I am aware that

on the next item a sum of £200 is provided for a travelling library, but very often the expense to out-back centres is too great to permit of their availing themselves of that provision.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Public Library of Western Australia is not a public library for Perth; it is a national library for the whole State. It is a storehouse of knowledge at which the people from any part of the State may get information which cannot be got anywhere else in Western Australia. I protest against the cutting down of such items as the public library. I do not think we have reached such a stage in our exchequer when it should be necessary to pare down institutions which have taken years to build up. We were told just now by the Treasurer in connection with another matter that £4,000 on a certain item was neither here nor there. In connection with institutions like this the striking off of a few hundred pounds is liable to do damage in one year which cannot be repaired in several years. This is not a rich man's library, but a poor man's, where those who have not books of reference of their own can obtain information on almost every subject under the sun.

The PREMIER: With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Leonora (Mr. Foley), I admit that we should encourage outside libraries, but as Treasurer I had to look around for means for reducing expenditure. Under existing conditions, when many people are requiring food, I think we may well reduce expenditure on such institutions as libraries. So far as the Perth Public Library is concerned, I admit the reduction of £500 is fairly substantial, but I think it is reasonable that we should find means of economising on institutions of this character. I would point out that the country libraries have suffered a reduction to the extent of £785, which is more than half last year's vote. I understand that the public library has something in the nature of an overdraft, while from balance sheets of the country institutes I find many of them have sufficient cash to carry them over the next 12 months. I wanted to encourage that spirit of thrift. The library in Perth is a national institution.

Mr. Foley: What about the out-back libraries?

The PREMIER: It would be inadvisable to cut down the national library vote to an extent which would preclude them from making necessary additions to the institution. There is no desire to unduly penalise it to the extent of making the loss irreparable. Of course we could not reduce the subsidies to roads boards and municipalities and allow the grants to libraries to remain intact; they too had to suffer some reduction. The trustees of the library drew my attention to the fact that they were not aware until half the year had expired, that it was intended to reduce their vote, and consequently they had entered into certain obligations which they were bound to honour. I informed them that if the amount which appears on the Estimates is exceeded, I will endeavour to assist them.

Item, Law Library, £100:

Mr. ROBINSON: The amount in the previous year was £150. Will the Premier state whether this is solely for the purchase of books?

The Premier: There is no question of salaries in this.

Mr. ROBINSON: The library of the Supreme Court is mainly used by the courts in contested cases. A number of reports and continuous volumes appear from year to year and £150 for the purchase of these in the past has been little enough. At the present time a great deal of new matter in connection with the war is making its appearance and many new books will also have to be purchased so that the amount might have been left unaltered. Perhaps there is a further sum provided in the Attorney General's Estimates.

The Premier: There is £100 for law books for the Crown Law Department.

Mr. ROBINSON: That is a different thing.

The Premier: Why do you not buy your own books?

Mr. ROBINSON: We all do. The judges, however, require these books for their library.

Item, Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery, £3,300:

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Perhaps it would be possible to effect further economies here and the amount so saved might be expended in connection with the Public Library.

The Minister for Mines: I agree with you that we should not maintain two museums, one across the line and the second at the other end of this building.

Mr. Robinson: Is the hon. member in order in referring to another place as a museum?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order; the remark was disorderly and must be withdrawn.

The Minister for Mines: If I was disorderly in making that observation, I willingly withdraw and apologise to the museum.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw unreservedly.

The Minister for Mines: I withdraw unreservedly.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: There cannot be any objection to a further reduction in this vote provided it does not interfere too much with the institution. The library could then be assisted to a further extent.

The PREMIER: A board of trustees controls the museum and the method of effecting economies is their concern.

Mr. Robinson: What do they do with the money?

The PREMIER: That is a question that is often asked. I am not in a position to say. As a matter of fact, they asked me to provide an increased amount this year and the director wrote to the trustees pointing out that in 1898 the museum received £5,000 and that since then the institution has been enlarged and it is open to the public for longer periods. The position is that the public will have to fall into line and visit the museum during specified hours if the trustees cannot make ends meet.

Mr. Robinson: Have any new purchases been made?

The PREMIER: I do not know whether they have lately added any Woodwardis or Hackettis.

Item, Mechanics' Institutes, Working Men's Associations, Art Societies, etc., £750:

Mr. TAYLOR: While the Premier has reduced the library vote by one-seventh, he has reduced the total vote for the back-country institutions by more than one-half. It is unfair to use the pruning knife to such an extent on the people of the back country whose facilities are so limited as compared with those of the people of Perth. In small towns the libraries are the only places where the people can read books and newspapers. This will practically close up a lot of those libraries. I desire to enter my protest against the reduction.

Item, Acclimatisation of fish, birds, and animals, £100:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am sorry to see a 50 per cent. reduction in this item. The society has been doing beneficial work, breeding fish in the rivers and liberating imported game in the bush.

The Premier: Until it is now necessary to go round and shoot the game; the deer for instance.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: What most strikes a visitor to Western Australia is the monotonous silence of the bush.

Mr. Foley: Deer do not kick up much row.

The Minister for Mines: It is the weird silence that attracts.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The society has done much to break the monotony of the bush, and to stock the rivers with fish. If the settler can get his food requirements from the rivers and the bush half his troubles disappear. I hope that when the revenue improves the item will be reinstated.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I support the hon. member. In the far South we have many beautiful brooks suitable for trout.

Mr. Smith: What about red herrings?

Mr. WILLMOTT: We get them in the Sunday newspaper. The Tourist Department endeavour to induce people to visit the South-West. If we had trout fishing many more people would spend their holidays down there. I hope the item will be increased next year.

The PREMIER: I do not entirely agree that our bush should be stocked with game and our rivers with fish. Most of these importations become a pest in the end. In some centres the farmers are already complaining bitterly about the deer, while if we fill our pools with fish the Railway Department cries out that the result is to render the water unfit for loco boilers. Most of the birds, too, become a pest if too closely protected. In the circumstances I think we are doing all that can be expected.

Vote—put and passed.

Vote—London Agency, £6,875:

Item, Incidental, including postage, stationery, travelling, rent, fuel, etc., £1,700:

Mr. ALLEN: I understand there has been some increase in rent. Will the Premier explain?

The PREMIER: The rent item has been increased owing to the occupation of Savoy House, but part of the premises is let, for which we receive £400, the net result being a saving.

Item, Purchase of a motor car, £710:

Mr. ALLEN: Has that car been actually purchased?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. ALLEN: Then, as in respect to so many items, it is not of much use objecting.

The Premier: You can enter a protest. What is your objection?

Mr. ALLEN: It is unnecessary expenditure. Up to the present the Agent General has done without a car.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: When I was Agent General I had to buy my own carriage.

Mr. ALLEN: I suppose it will cost another couple of hundred to run the car. Surely we could have economised here.

The PREMIER: The car was purchased long before the present conditions arose. It will show a considerable saving. Our London agency does a tremendous amount of indenting for the Government departments, and we have inspecting engineers running about all over the place. Their transportation has been a costly business, and will be much cheaper per motor car. Moreover, the Agent General is entitled to this necessary convenience.

Mr. Foley: Anyhow, Kessell will want it.

Mr. ROBINSON: Does it mean that the necessary accompaniments will follow the car; that there will be a chauffeur and a garage? And is the chauffeur to be paid the same wage as the Government chauffeurs in Perth get, namely £225?

The Premier: That is not correct.

Mr. ROBINSON: Is it intended to instal a garage, with chauffeur and necessary equipment?

The Premier: No. Arrangements have been made for the car to be garaged?

Mr. ROBINSON: But we pay for it?

The Premier: Certainly.

Mr. ROBINSON: That is all I wanted to know.

Item, Expenses incurred by the Agent General in entertaining, £300:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The expenses are increasing in several directions. While there should be no reasonable objection to allowing the Agent General sufficient to meet all requirements, his time probably will not now be so fully occupied as in the past. His functions are to arrange loans, entertain, and deal with the matter of emigration to the State. As regards emigration, there will probably be little to do for some years. Does the Premier think the expenditure is justified, seeing that the Agent General's duties have apparently diminished?

The PREMIER: We recognise that fact, and the vote has been reduced by £200. It was intended to provide £500, but we thought that under existing conditions £300 should suffice. It would be unfair to ask anyone to take up this responsible position in London and entertain Western Australian citizens largely out of his own private purse. The Agent General is not paid a lump sum, but draws on the amount by voucher.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Has the work fallen off?

The PREMIER: Yes, to some extent as regards emigration.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And as regards loans.

The PREMIER: No, the position is more difficult, as intricate questions of finance are now arising. The Agent General is a Lieutenant Colonel attached

to the Australian military forces, and is rendering service in regard to troops arriving in England. He is busier now than before, and this vote is to assist him to suitably carry out his duties of entertaining.

Mr. ROBINSON: I support the remarks of the Premier. When in London the year before last, I observed the large amount of expenditure which the Agent General was called upon to make to entertain West Australians. This expense should not come out of his own pocket.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Does he entertain every West Australian who goes to London?

Mr. ROBINSON: No, but every West Australian who goes there asks to see him and a great many of them are entertained by him.

Mr. Foley: A lot of them would not get past Kessell now.

Mr. ROBINSON: When the Premier was in London it was essential that he should meet many people with whom business is done. I attended a luncheon given to the Premier by Sir Newton Moore, and of over 100 people present, not one was there who could reasonably have been excluded. It is good for the State to have a representative in the heart of the Empire who knows these people and can introduce our public men to them. If the item had been larger, I would have supported it.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—*Public Service Commissioner*, £2,291; *Refunds*, £1,300; *Taxation*, £12,918—agreed to.

Vote—*Workers' Homes Board*, £5,175:

Item, Rent, £200:

Mr. ROBINSON: Under this item there is a reference to a motor-car, but no amount is shown. Does this mean that nothing is being spent this year on a motor car?

The CHAIRMAN: That was last year's vote.

Mr. ROBINSON: Was that item for the purchase or upkeep of a car?

The Premier: It was for a car purchased for the engineer in the North-West. It was transferred to the Work-

ers' Homes Board, and they had to buy it.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Miscellaneous Services, £44, 914*: Item, Rescue and Prison Gate Work, £300:

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I protest against the reduction of this item by £100. Not by such reductions will any real saving be effected. I protest more particularly because a half of the financial year has passed. Does not the Premier's remark regarding the Public Library apply to societies like the Salvation Army, the Home of the Good Shepherd, and others carrying on this class of work?

The Premier: There are only two and they will now receive £150 each. They employ those they take from the prison.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: They have to keep them.

The Premier: They employ them, too.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: If they do, these people are a source of expense and not profit. Those engaged in rescue work meet prisoners on their discharge and endeavour to induce them to go to one of these institutions while work is found or other arrangements are made for them. They also attend the police courts and take charge of people who would otherwise be sent to prison. If this work is relaxed the country will be put to greater expense. These societies should be encouraged in their humane work. The Premier should reconsider the matter.

The PREMIER: I appreciate the work of these institutions, but under existing conditions they cannot expect the financial assistance they have received in the past. I have been officially informed that one of these institutions received 19 inmates from the police court and gaol last year and was paid a subsidy of £200, equal to £10 per head per inmate. That would be a fairly good start for these persons. I do not think we have treated them as shabbily as the hon. member makes out. It has been regrettable that it has been necessary to reduce the amount, but I have made the reduction as light as possible. Perhaps these institutions will be able to call upon those who

have assisted them in the past to help them a little more than they have already done.

Item, Exhibitions, Java, A.N.A., Melbourne, £300:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Is it the intention of the Government to continue these exhibitions outside the State? We have heard of gentlemen going to Java with the object of pushing the flour trade of Western Australia, but I do not know that any report has yet been submitted, or whether any trade has been developed with this Eastern country as a result of this visit.

The PREMIER: I have received a report, which is of an extensive nature. This has been money well spent. The pushing of the flour trade is of some value to Western Australia. The more wheat we can grist here for the purpose of exporting flour the more bran and pollard shall we have in the State. Good work has been done in the direction of these exhibits and a good number of prizes has been secured by Western Australian exhibitors.

Item, Fire Brigades Board Contribution, £7,500:

Mr. MUNSIE: This item has been reduced by £125. I rise to protest against the system of Fire Brigades boards altogether, and against this amount of money being paid by the Government in any shape or form. So far as country districts are concerned, this amount is purely a grant to insurance companies. The Fire Brigades Act was supposed to protect the public, but in every instance it has worked detrimentally to them. I hope in the near future to see the Act repealed altogether and the same system adopted as is in vogue in Victoria today.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot deal with the question of legislation.

Mr. MUNSIE: I merely desire to enter a protest against the system adopted in this State and the expenditure of this money.

The Premier: This is provided for by Act of Parliament.

Mr. MUNSIE: Could I not move to reduce the item by £500 in order to get an expression of opinion from hon. members upon the subject? I realise that the grant will have to be paid irrespective of whether the item is reduced or not. I think if the amount was reduced the Government would look round at the earliest opportunity to find some means of altering the present system.

The PREMIER: The proper method that should be adopted by the hon. member would be for him to table a motion that in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the present Act governing Fire Brigades boards should be amended. If this item was reduced it would not affect the position because this matter is governed by Act of Parliament. It is hardly right that hon. members should be asked to express an opinion on an Act of Parliament when the Estimates are being passed.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already called the hon. member to order.

The PREMIER: I would propose to the hon. member that he should follow out my suggestion so that the whole question of fire brigades boards could then be discussed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is of course useless to move for a reduction of this item. The administration of the Fire Brigades Act has given a good deal of dissatisfaction. Before the establishment of the Fire Brigades Board we had in the State a very excellent volunteer system, the men working under which did good work. This Board has, however, endeavoured wherever possible to cut down the volunteer system. A definite statement was made that if the Board had borrowing powers it would mean the bringing about of a reduction in their annual expenses. Instead of that being the case, the annual expenses have remained about the same, or rather, they may be said to have increased. Some of my constituents have complained very strongly against the cutting down of the volunteer brigade at Cottesloe, which is left practically without any fire protection at all. I am a great believer in the

volunteer system. When the Bill was before the House I raised the question that the local authorities throughout the State had not fair representation on the Board. Possibly, now that the matter has been drawn attention to, the Government representatives on the Fire Brigades Board may be able to bring before them the disapproval which has been expressed in this Committee. The Board are increasing their expenses by having permanent men instead of volunteers.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: What is the total estimate for this Fire Brigade Board?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is £7,500 here; that is two-eighths of the expenditure. I merely wish to lodge a protest against the Board for the manner in which they have dealt with the volunteer system, which has done such good work in the past.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I agree with the Minister for Works that when the Act was passed the intention was to maintain, as far as possible, the volunteer system side by side with the other. Undoubtedly in the past volunteer fire brigades did excellent work at a minimum of cost, and I regret that the whole expense is now carried out by paid brigades. The representations of insurance companies are not likely to be of much use because it does not matter to them. They simply put the difference on to their insurance rates. The matter is largely in the hands of the Colonial Secretary.

The Minister for Works: No, it is not.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Act says that the Minister must approve of the estimates of the board. That being so, he can simply say that he will not approve of such estimates.

Item, Parks, Recreation Grounds, etc.—Grants for Maintenance and Improvements—King's Park Board, £1,725; Coastal Grounds, etc., £750; Goldfields Grounds, £525:

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I wish to protest against the reduction made in this item, particularly in regard to King's Park. The reduction is not likely to

prove an economy. This is a park which cannot in any sense be considered a Perth park. It is, in fact, a national park, and has been built at great cost. Unless money is provided for its maintenance it will depreciate in value and beauty, to say nothing of the throwing away of the money spent upon it. The amount provided in former years, I think £2,200, was barely enough to provide for the decent maintenance of the park. There are something like 11 miles of roads to be kept up, and unless they are properly looked after they will soon begin to go back. At the present time they are covered with loose dust for want of watering and it is no exaggeration to say that if they are allowed to get into disrepair it will cost £5,000 to put them right.

The Minister for Mines: This item shows an increase on last year's vote.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Minister is taking the park as a whole. This is one of the best advertisements the State has, and it is known almost throughout the world. I appeal to the Minister to reconsider the proposed reduction, and can assure him that if the park is not looked after it will become a very bad advertisement for the State.

The Minister for Mines: You are now referring to the cost of the water?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes; but the board, if it had the water, would not have the labour required to apply the water. Again, the 9½ acres under grass must be maintained, or else it will revert to the original sand. Some years ago the board had its own water supply, but the then Minister for Works (Hon. W. D. Johnson) forced the board to obtain its water from the metropolitan supply. If that convenience were restored to the board, and an electric pump installed, it would afford some measure of relief.

Mr. ROBINSON: The cutting down of the King's Park grant by £500 means that £500 less will be spent in wages by the King's Park board, or that four out of eleven employees must be sacrificed.

Mr. Bolton: Is the board paying £2 a week wages?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Some of the employees are boys.

Mr. ROBINSON: It means the driving of those four employees into the ranks of the unemployed. Hon. members can, if they will, see for themselves that the roads in the park are being cut up more and more day by day. If the present state of affairs continues but a little longer, the park roads will have to be closed against traffic; and this will mean a great loss to the people of Western Australia. Are we in such a position here that we must adopt measures of such stringency as this? The pruner, too, must learn his trade; and I maintain the financial pruner who operates on these Estimates has not learnt his trade.

Mr. FOLEY: In common with metropolitan members, the last speaker regards everything on the coast as representing broad national lines. When other members speak of the interests of the whole State, it is regarded as parochialism. Many members here describe socialism as a horror, but none of its opponents refuse to accept their bit of socialism when the opportunity offers. The King's Park is now being treated somewhat as out-back parks were treated even during good times. The outback people, however, come to their own assistance in this respect. Why should not the moneyed men of Perth show their patriotism by contributing a little of their private means towards the upkeep of the King's Park? The difference between what is spent on metropolitan parks, and on out-back parks, is too great.

Mr. Taylor: Not a shilling of Government money has been spent on parks in my electorate.

Mr. FOLEY: Nor in mine. Certainly, I would vote against any increase in this item. Out-back people cannot get the ear of the Minister on such a question as that of parks; and the farther off a complainant resides from the seat of Government, the remoter his chance of having his grievance remedied.

Mr. McDOWALL: It is well known throughout Western Australia that Coolgardie has the best park in this State. I

do not object to the King's Park grant, because I regard that area as the national park of Western Australia and as a splendid advertisement for the State; but it must be borne in mind that there are in Western Australia other parks which are of great value to the people residing in their vicinity. Last year £700 was placed on the Estimates for goldfields parks, and of that amount the goldfields received £175. I can but hope they will get the other £525 this year. The splendid park of Coolgardie is maintained by people who rate themselves; and people who in that fashion help themselves, I submit, deserve assistance. I hope Perth residents will take example by the citizens of Coolgardie, and also strike a park rate if there exists a legal method of doing it. I desire to impress upon the Premier the necessity for keeping his promises in regard to parks on the goldfields.

Mr. ALLEN: I desire to point out that the Perth City Council, while I was a member of that body, set aside a sum of £3,000 annually for the upkeep of parks in Perth. King's Park is essentially a national park. I recollect in this Chamber, when the question of the nationalisation of the trams was under discussion, members opposite used the argument that the trams belonged to the whole of the people. Now, when it comes to a question of parks, it is not claimed that King's Park belongs to the whole of the people, but only to the people of Perth. I want to emphasise that the people of Perth contribute at the rate of £3,000 per annum, and similarly the people of Subiaco, and Claremont, and other centres. The vote now under discussion is essentially a vote for a national park, and to suggest, as the member for Coolgardie has done, that the people of Perth should be taxed for the upkeep of this park is ridiculous. I would point out also that if the vote for King's Park be cut down there is a danger that the roads through the park will become in such a condition of disrepair that they will have to be remade.

Mr. TAYLOR: The goldfields have been neglected more during the last two or three years on this vote than any other part of Western Australia. In my own district not one penny has been spent on recreation reserves during the last three years. The people are there, and there are parks on the goldfields, but they have suffered more than in any other part.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Mr. TAYLOR: I can show the Premier correspondence which has been addressed to me by the Under Treasurer stating that money is not available for the purpose. At the same time the people on the goldfields have themselves spent more on parks and reserves than has been spent by people in other parts of the State. If, as has been urged, the roads in King's Park are falling into disrepair, why not close the roads and reduce the motor traffic? If that is not done it will cost later on more than three times the amount of this vote to put the roads into a proper state of repair. I am opposed to the attitude of the Government with reference to recreation grounds and parks on the goldfields.

The PREMIER: I expected this. One could not possibly touch a vote of this character without members representing districts affected complaining, notwithstanding their continual outcry about the necessity for economy. If the road through King's Park is being destroyed it would not hurt very much if the gates were closed for a period. There is a road around the park and it would not be asking too much that people who use the park merely for pleasure should go round. In cutting down this vote we have not done very much harm. The member for Mount Margaret was quite wrong in his statement that goldfields recreation grounds have not received fair treatment from this Government. The Government have laid down new conditions in regard to grants for recreation grounds throughout the State, with the exception of King's Park, which has been recognised all along as a national park. As regards recreation grounds on the goldfields, this Government have

distributed there a greater proportion of the vote than ever before.

Mr. Taylor: Where has the money gone to?

The PREMIER: If the hon. member turns up the Public Accounts for the last three years he will find all the details there. Only since I have been Treasurer has the vote been divided up in three sections, as shown on the Estimates now. Previously, King's Park was given first consideration; then the other coastal parks were given a proportion of the balance, and the remainder went to the goldfields recreation grounds. Now, the goldfields get a fair share with other districts, and I think it is only fair that those districts where the people have an opportunity of obtaining healthy amusement on the recreation grounds, or of escaping the broiling heat, should receive our first consideration. In future, those applying for grants for recreation grounds or parks must submit a statement showing the amount expended on the grounds by the people themselves either by the exercise of their own energy in clearing, or by expenditure from funds contributed by the people.

Mr. Foley: Do you make any restriction as to how money is spent in King's Park?

The PREMIER: We cannot place restriction in that case.

Mr. Foley: They can give what they like, and spend what they like.

The PREMIER: If they are spending money improperly, we still retain control of the vote. These regulations have been framed to give us better control, and the Government are determined they will not help those who are not prepared to help themselves. That disinclination on the part of the people to help themselves is shown in connection with most of our institutions in the metropolitan area. I do not know any metropolitan district in Australia where the public renders so little assistance to public institutions as in Perth. Take our hospitals. Their total cost is borne by the national exchequer, and nearly the whole of our charitable vote is spent in Perth.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The same thing applies to the goldfields.

The PREMIER: Nothing like it, as the hon. member well knows.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: What about about Kalgoorlie and Boulder?

The PREMIER: I do not want to enter upon a controversy; but votes of this sort should be controlled in order to see that the money is properly expended.

Mr. James Gardiner: The racecourses on the fields are themselves an advertisement of what the people there do.

The PREMIER: Yes, so also is the municipal park and recreation reserve established by the local people. The same thing applies in the timber districts, where men, who have worked hard all day, apply their leisure hours to clearing land for the purpose of making recreation grounds. Those are the people who deserve encouragement, and that is what we are trying to do.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The King's Park Board had their own water supply, but they were forced by the Government to take water from the reservoir. At the present time, when the supply is restricted and the board are only permitted to water their roads once a week, the Minister might allow them to use the supply from the source they originally took it from, and if the Minister supplied them with a motor and pump, they could water the park roads independently of the supply from the reservoir.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At the present time we are able to allow street watering to take place on two days instead of one day a week, and as we are approaching the end of the summer, I am hoping that we may be able to even increase the number of days. Other bodies have made a request similar to that preferred by the member for Perth, and if we were at the beginning of the summer instead of practically at the end of it, it might be worthy of consideration. At the present time, however, we might allow the arrangement which has been entered into to continue. The harm that might be done to the King's Park roads is not any greater than that which might be done to the roads of muni-

cipalities, and if we were to be generous in the matter of water for street purposes, I should be inclined to act generously towards the local bodies because their roads must be kept open for traffic, whereas the park roads can be closed, and no great harm will follow.

Item, Retiring Allowances, £2,500:

Mr. ROBINSON: Last year the sum of £1,000 was voted, and the amount expended was £4,466. This year £2,500 appears on the Estimates, and at the same ratio the expenditure will be £10,000. Will the Premier state what the £2,500 is for, and whether it cannot be struck out altogether?

The PREMIER: We do not pay retiring allowances until the officials actually retire, and we must have the vote for that purpose. Some retirements have already taken place, and others are anticipated. Members of the service may retire of their own accord, by reason of their having reached the age limit.

Mr. Robinson: Are you making any retirements this year?

The PREMIER: I am not, but the Government may be doing so.

Mr. Robinson: Well, do not do it.

The PREMIER: One would think from the hon. member's remarks that every time we make retirements we lose money.

Mr. Robinson: So you do.

The PREMIER: Four magistrates have already been retired this year.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They do not get retiring allowances; they get pensions.

The PREMIER: The retirements last year were heavier than it is anticipated they will be this year. There were 19 altogether last year, and all received retiring allowances. It must be remembered that many officials who retire do not come under the Superannuation Act and they get an allowance for every year of service.

Item, Interest and Exchange, £2,000:

Mr. ALLEN: I notice that last year the vote of £1,500 was exceeded by over £12,000.

The PREMIER: This item is made up of interest and exchange. It provides for interest on overdrafts at the London

County and Westminster Bank, exchange on roads board orders drawn on the Colonial Treasurer, orders drawn by the Treasury paymasters in the North-West districts and remittances to the Eastern States to meet interest on local inscribed stock. The amount was heavy last year principally because we arranged an overdraft with the London County and Westminster Bank, and the interest on that had to be paid from this vote. I could not foresee that the market would not be favourable when I wanted money.

Item, Subsidies, North-West coast survey, £3,750.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: What is the position in regard to the North-West survey? Some years ago an agreement was entered into between the Imperial Government, the Commonwealth, and the State to carry out this work. Has the survey been completed?

The PREMIER: Last year I questioned whether it was necessary to provide this amount, as I understood the agreement had expired. We discovered, however, that it had not expired, and we are still called upon to contribute this amount.

Item, Compensation to W. E. Sudholz for loss of office as Chief Accountant and Sub-manager State Steamship Service, £495:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Why does this amount appear? Under what arrangements was Mr. Sudholz engaged, and by what means was he retired?

The PREMIER: He was engaged for a definite period. The hon. member knows the history of his retirement. Mr. Sudholz's health was broken down by the attacks made upon him, and in consequence he was retired. We agreed to allow the question of compensation to go to arbitration, and the amount provided on the Estimates represents the award of the arbitrators.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is strange that this gentleman, who was selected as being capable of running the State steamers, should be incapable of filling a minor position. The item represents money thrown away. After two years of work the officer receives a retiring allowance equal to one year's salary. The Govern-

ment bungled the business from the outset, and this officer has been sacrificed in order to cover up the sins of the Government. I protest against expenditure of this kind. Why did we not get any report from the Royal Commission which inquired into Mr. Sudholz's management? What would that report have revealed?

The Minister for Works: For God's sake let the man alone. He is trying to earn a living now. Why do you want to injure him?

Hon. Frank Wilson: You did him the injury.

The Minister for Works: I have never been guilty of any of the shady tricks you have done.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must withdraw.

The Minister for Works: I withdraw. At all events, if they want to attack the Government let them do so, leaving the man's name out of it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: You treated him shabbily, and the Government are now hiding behind him and costing the country £495.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Treasury department.

Railways and Tramways department (Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister).

Vote — *Railways and Tramways*, £1,591,707:

Item, Secretary's, Accounts and Audit Branches, £28,050:

Mr. FOLEY: Recently the Government decided to reduce the hours of the working men to 44 per week. Will the Premier give us an assurance that the wages and allowances paid to the foremen and supervisors will be affected to the same degree?

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows that, under existing conditions, we cannot reduce the salaried staff. Any man not on the salaried staff, whether he be foremen or supervisor, must suffer a reduction the same as the ordinary wages man; but we cannot interfere with the salaried staff, for they are paid on an annual basis.

Mr. Thomson: What do you propose to do with them?

The PREMIER: That question can be dealt with at a later stage. I think there are methods other than reduction by which our object can be attained. I know there is a keen desire that, instead of reducing hours we should reduce wages and salaries, but I am not going to reduce salaries, as the hon. member desires.

Mr. Thomson: No, I do not. You cannot attribute that to me.

The PREMIER: The hours of the salaried staff are only 36 or 37 now, so I cannot reduce them to 44. The staff is by no means overmanned.

Mr. Taylor: It must be.

The PREMIER: It is not. Our train mileage has increased considerably, notwithstanding that our earnings have fallen off.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are not running the same trains.

The PREMIER: But we are running an increased mileage, which means an increased cost of administration. Moreover, quite a number of the staff have joined the expeditionary forces, and we have not filled the vacancies. So it will be seen that the staff is not overmanned.

Mr. Robinson: Does the salaried staff work only 36 hours per week?

The PREMIER: They work the same office hours as the men in the public service.

Mr. Robinson: Do the public servants work only 36 hours a week?

Mr. Bolton: Some of them only six.

Mr. Robinson: I have not heard that before and I am sure the public are not aware of it.

The PREMIER: I have been repeating that fact for years and yet the public are not aware of it. To be exact, the public servants work 38 hours a week.

Mr. Robinson: Then I stand corrected.

Mr. Foley: Some of them catch the 10.30 train from Cottesloe, when they ought to begin work at 9 o'clock.

The PREMIER: We have just received the report of the Commissioner on our railways, and the most I can say at this juncture is that owing to the closing down of some of our industries due to the drought, the traffic has decreased. The earning capacity of the railways has

diminished and the present month will probably be the most serious.

Mr. James Gardiner: In South Australia the railway revenue has fallen off £220,000 in three months.

The PREMIER: By the end of the month our railway revenue will have fallen off something like £80,000 for the three months. Not only is the volume of traffic less, but the best-paying traffic has decreased. In some industries it has been found necessary to practically close down, while in others the output has been reduced and consequently the railways are not paying to the extent they were. Timber, which represents one of the best-paying propositions, has been considerably affected. The average quantity of coal is not being conveyed to the ports, because the bunkering trade has fallen off. Previously we were sending out fertilisers and bringing in wheat as back-loading. At present the mileage has to be covered in order to transport the fertiliser, but there is no wheat to carry on the return trip. While the train mileage will probably be maintained, our expenditure must increase. This is one of the most serious aspects of the present situation, and I regret there is no hope of recovery during this financial year or even in the opening months of the next financial year. I trust that with a better season we may experience a good harvest; the outlook for the pastoral industry is already brighter and when the timber industry returns to its normal condition, the railways should again be in a position to pay capital charges and show a slight profit. During this year, however, the position will be serious from the point of view of loss of railway revenue and increase in mileage.

Hon. J. Mitchell: If that is so, how can you arrange for the engine-men to stand down four hours a week?

The PREMIER: There are some branches of the service to which the reduction of hours cannot be applied. Particularly is this the case with the loco. branch, as the men have certain trips to make.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You cannot reduce them if they have more running to do.

The PREMIER: There is not likely to be much reduction in the loco. branch, but in the workshops where nearly one half of the railway men are employed the hours have been reduced. Wherever possible we have applied the 44 hours a week, not only to bring about a reduction in expenditure, but to keep the men in our employ. Twelve months hence, I am hopeful that railway operations will show such an expansion that we shall require more men than are employed to-day, and I repeat it is far better to retain the men who are now employed and have railway experience than to retrench them and lose their services for all time. The 44 hours a week system is of advantage to the Government in this respect, although it does not achieve the same economy as retrenchment would do.

Hon. J. Mitchell: To whom does the 44 hours apply?

The PREMIER: To the wages staff wherever it is practicable to reduce their time.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Not the station-masters?

The PREMIER: No, they are on the salaried staff.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.26 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 17th February, 1915.

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