

However, I understand that instructions have since been given to the Commissioner to resume the sale of revenue stamps at the Fremantle court house.

The PREMIER: On representations made to me by the hon. member (Mr. Angwin), I issued instructions to have the sale of stamps resumed at the Fremantle court house; but the matter will take some little time to adjust. Hon. members can rest assured that the public will be afforded every facility for obtaining stamps.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the the report adopted.

*House adjourned at 9.15 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 21st November, 1916.*

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

### PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: Municipal Corporations Act. By-law No. 3 adopted by the City of Perth.

### BILL—FRANCHISE.

#### *In Committee:*

Resumed from the 16th November. Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2 —Preservation of Franchise:

[37]

[Hon. J. W. Hickey had moved an amendment that Subclause 3 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"Where any person on active service with His Majesty's Naval or Military Forces at the commencement of such service was enrolled and qualified to vote for a member of the Legislative Council as a householder, his wife (except where she is enrolled as the owner of the same premises) shall be entitled to vote in his name."]

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government are fully in sympathy with the object of the hon. Mr. Hickey but the objection I have to the amendment is that it provides that one person shall vote on behalf of another person. The same result can be achieved better by adding the following proviso to Subclause 3 as it stands at present:—

Provided that if such person is a married man and absent from the State and his wife remains in occupation of the dwelling-house she may on application to the Electoral Registrar be registered as an elector on the household qualification in the place of her husband.

The objection to the clause as it stands is that it would create this anomaly, that in the event of the wife of a soldier remaining in the house she occupied at the time of the soldier's departure he would still be regarded as the occupier and his name would remain on the roll, and hers could not, even if she wished it, be placed there; but if she left the house which they occupied at the time he volunteered for service and went to another house across the street she would become the occupier of the other house and could register. On the return of the husband the provisions of this Bill would no longer apply to him and consequently he would again register as the occupier. I ask hon. members to vote against the amendment striking out the clause, and I will then move the addition of the words I have just read out.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: There is a good deal of principle in this matter. The vote of a person on the Legislative Council rolls is a different thing from that of a person on the Legislative Assembly rolls. The votes for the Legislative Council represent

interest and thrift in comparison with the votes for the Legislative Assembly, which are on the adult suffrage basis. When we transfer the vote from the husband to the wife, we probably transfer it in many cases from one who has had a good deal of experience, and who knows a great deal about the affairs of the country, to possibly a person who is thoroughly inexperienced altogether. As it is only to be used during the absence of the person on active service, I offer no opposition to the clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We have had no notice of this new amendment, and I have had no opportunity of seeing it. If it had not been for Mr. Hickey probably the Bill would have gone through without discussion. We ought to have the new proposed amendment placed on the Notice Paper, and I hope the Minister will have this done for a day or two.

Amendment put and negatived.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This Bill has been before the House for some weeks. Whilst I am grateful to Mr. Hickey for pointing out what I think is a weakness in the Bill, I say it is the duty of every hon. member to make himself acquainted with the measures before the House. There will be ample time between now and the third reading for the Bill to be re-committed if desired. I move an amendment—

*That at the end of Subclause 3 the following proviso be inserted:—"Provided that if such person is a married man and absent from the State and his wife remains in occupation of the dwelling-house she may on application to the electoral registrar be registered as an elector on the household qualification in the place of her husband."*

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That would be only during the husband's absence. There might be trouble when the husband returns as to who had the vote, the wife or the husband.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Directly the husband returns the provisions of the Bill cease to apply and the Electoral Act as it stands is reverted to.

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Title—agreed to:

Bill reported with an amendment.

## BILL—SPECIAL LEASE (LAKE CLIFTON).

*In Committee.*

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to grant lease:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The proviso to this clause says that the railway traffic shall be run to the satisfaction of "our said Minister," which means the Minister for Lands. Here we have an anomaly in the Minister for Lands looking after railway matters. Confusion of administration is likely to result if questions of pure railway administration are referred to the Minister for Lands.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Condition 9 of the special lease refers to the Minister for Railways. That Minister has the responsibility of fixing rates of freight, and the traffic is to be run to his satisfaction.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Again and again in the agreement railway questions are referred to the Minister for Lands. Undoubtedly "our said Minister" in the proviso means the Minister for Lands.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I see some confusion in condition 9 of the lease. The Minister for Railways, according to my reading, does not come into the question at all until he is desired to do so by the Minister for Lands. I wish to emphasise the absurdity of our discussing an agreement which we are powerless to amend.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: In accordance with my favourite practice, I shall throw the responsibility on the Government. In view of the history of the timber, tramway, and gas companies in this country during the last 20 years, I am surprised that the Chamber lets these agreements go through on the assurance of the Minister that "it is all right." In 20 years' time this agreement may involve the country in a cost of £20,000. The late Government adopted the proposal, and the present Government have taken it over; but I should like to see the Bill referred to a select committee, so that hon.

members may have an opportunity of knowing what it is all about. However, accepting the assurance of the Colonial Secretary, I shall not oppose the clause.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Having drawn the Minister's attention to the matter, I am quite prepared to let the clause go. When the hon. gentleman has had an opportunity of looking into the clause, he can have the necessary correction made on the third reading. Condition 6 of the lease says that the Minister for Lands may make by-laws for the regulation of traffic on this proposed private railway. The gentleman who was Minister for Lands at the time the Bill was drawn wanted to have the whole matter in his hands. In a well-regulated Administration, however, such a position should not obtain. By one or two mistakes of the draughtsman, apparently, the Minister for Railways is empowered to control this proposed railway.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think the suggested amendments will improve the Bill at all. The idea is that the measure shall be administered by the Minister for Lands. He will be the man to see that the conditions of the lease are carried out. The only need for the Minister for Railways is when technical railway questions arise, such as whether the rails are in sound condition and the rolling stock in good order.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to point out to hon. members that if any amendment is desired in the agreement, this is the time to move it.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3, 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Power to run traffic on railway:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: On the second reading I drew attention to the power under this clause to the concessionaire or his transferee to do what our Railway Commissioner cannot do—that is, use any kind of fuel. The Minister will say that this means only coal, wood, and so forth; but that is not how the public will interpret the clause. Some qualification is needed to prevent the public from being misled. Suppose the concessionaire burns the countryside; his defence will be that the burning is merely incidental to the fuel he uses, and that under his Act

of Parliament he has power to use any fuel he pleases.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: What about Clause 6 of the Bill?

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: That clause would not override the absolute power to use any kind of fuel, even the most inflammable. The defence I have suggested would be put forward by the concessionaire against claims for compensation. Some saving clause is needed, such as that the fuel shall be subject to the approval of the Minister for Lands or of the Minister for Railways.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I understand there is absolutely no danger, whatever fuel is used, of setting fire to the country, and therefore there is no reason for limiting the kinds of fuel to be used.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Though there may not be immediate danger from fire I would point out that there are extensive swamps in that locality and when those swamps come into cultivation, which they will do for intense culture, there may be a serious danger from fire.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: The Commissioner of Railways has not the same freedom in this connection, therefore why is it considered necessary that the concessionaire be given a free hand?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

*That after the word "fuel" in the third line, the words "subject to the approval of the Minister for Lands" be inserted.*

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Schedules—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

#### *Re-committal.*

On motion by the Hon. J. Ewing Bill re-committed for the purpose of further considering Clauses 2 and 3.

Clause 2—Power to grant lease:

Hon. J. EWING: I move an amendment—

*That the following proviso be added to the clause:—"Provided further that notwithstanding that the term of the lease is only to commence twelve calendar months from the declaration of peace, or at such earlier date as may be agreed upon between the Minister and the intended lessee, it*

*shall be the duty of the lessee, within twelve calendar months of the passing of this Act, to proceed with the construction of the railway under the terms and conditions set out in the said intended lease, and the Government will supply the lessee with suitable rails second hand, free of cost, for this purpose to be replaced by new rails when procurable by the lessee. The railway shall be completed within two years of the passing of this Act, and the lessee shall thereafter supply lime to the public on the terms and conditions set out in Clause 13 of the intended lease."*

The schedule provides that the lease shall not start until twelve months after the declaration of peace, and as that date is at present somewhat vague, there is no finality in the Bill as it stands. Again it is set out that a period of two years shall be allowed the concessionaire in which to construct the line. Under the agreement as it stands the lime may not be available for some years to come. I have no idea of hampering the concessionaire in any way, but I know that there is a quantity of second-hand rails available in this State, all 45lb. rails having been taken up practically all over the State. By this means the objection that the concessionaire is not in a position to secure rails would be overcome, and we would be assured that the lime would be available more quickly for the use of settlers. I suggest to the Leader of the House that he confer with the concessionaire and see if some arrangement could not be come to on this point.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am by no means sure that the Government are in a position to enter into an undertaking to supply the necessary rails. The hon. member has apparently overlooked the fact that the payment of rent starts at once. I do not think it likely the concessionaire will pay rent for an indefinite time without the railway. His only chance is to get to work as quickly as possible. The terms of the lease are not confined to twelve calendar months from the declaration of peace, for there is a proviso that the work shall be started at as early a date as can possibly be arranged. I am afraid I could not accept an amendment by which the Government were to undertake to provide the rails.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I agree with Mr. Ewing that there should be some limit of time, but I certainly cannot support the amendment. He proposes that they should "proceed with the construction." We have had instances of the Government proceeding with the construction by turning the first sod and leaving it at that. The phrase might mean anything. Again, the Government are to supply the rails free of cost. Of course it is all right if they have the rails, but we have no assurance of that. I am ready to support the hon. member in respect to the limitation of time, but I cannot agree with the amendment in its present form.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: Since it has been pointed out that the supply of lime, which mostly interests Mr. Ewing, is only a side line, and that the manufacture of cement is the chief object of the concessionaire, there is the difficulty, not only of getting the rails, but of getting machinery. I am with the hon. member in regard to his proposed limitation of time, but I am afraid we will have to trust to the Minister to see that the work begins as early as possible.

Hon. J. EWING: There is no guarantee whatever as to the time. It means that we are to protect the concessionaire for, perhaps, six or seven years. I do not feel inclined to have the matter tied up in this way. I am not so concerned about the cement as about the lime required by the settlers. That is the main thing. I have moved the amendment in an endeavour to get some more reasonable conditions. The proposed conditions as to time are altogether unreasonable. I am prepared to leave the matter until the third reading or any subsequent time if the Colonial Secretary will get the Minister for Lands to confer with the concessionaire and see if some equitable understanding cannot be arrived at.

The Colonial Secretary: I am quite agreeable to that.

Hon. E. ROSE: I think the proposed time is altogether too long to wait for the lime for the settlers. No one knows when peace will be declared, and so we may have to wait five or six years before the line is constructed. If the present lessee is not in a position to start the railway within the next two years, we could easily get someone else to do the work. Three years ago we

had an offer on somewhat similar conditions, and I am sure the man who made that offer would be prepared to construct the line within the next two years. It has been said that the lessee proposes to make his money out of the cement; but from a State point of view that is a consideration secondary to the provision of lime for the settlers. If the Minister will confer with the concessionaire, no doubt satisfactory arrangements could be made.

**Hon. R. G. ARDAGH:** The amendment is unfair. We have to consider the fact that, owing to the war, it is somewhat difficult to procure machinery. Probably that is one of the reasons why the clause was framed in its present shape. It is only reasonable. We have no guarantee that the Government would be able to construct the line in less than the period provided in the clause. The production of lime is necessary, not only in that district, but throughout the State. I hope the amendment will not be carried.

**Hon. J. CORNELL:** I will support any amendment that fixes a definite period in the agreement for the starting of the line, but I will not support an amendment which provides that the Government shall supply rails free of cost. The agreement is a new departure in concessions. It is so worded as to give the concessionaire a first mortgage on this proposition until twelve months after the declaration of peace. That is very unfair. Who knows that the war will not go on for another three or four years? If the agreement passes as printed, no one else will have the right to apply for the concession until 12 months after the declaration of peace. This clause has never been included in any previous concession. I would be prepared to support any definite provision for the starting of the line, but at present there is no obligation on the concessionaire to do what is set out in Clause 3 until twelve months after the declaration of peace, unless it shall have been mutually agreed between himself and the Minister.

**Hon. J. A. GREIG:** This line is urgently required, but the cost of its construction at the present time will be very considerable, and to compel these people to do anything immediately would be placing in their way obstacles which I would not care to meet.

If the concessionaire develops the lime deposits we should give him every consideration. We know that at the present time machinery is practically unprocureable and the services of men are not obtainable. I would like to see this line laid so that the agricultural industry might receive some benefit from it, but I cannot agree to the amendment of Mr. Ewing because it seems to me it will be placing too big a handicap upon those who are offering to take on this matter.

**The COLONIAL SECRETARY:** It is almost four years since these people have been endeavouring to develop this land. They have been delayed year after year.

**Hon. J. F. Cullen:** Not by Parliament.

**The COLONIAL SECRETARY:** No, and now it is suggested, in war time, that they should be compelled, not only to build this railway, necessarily at a greatly increased cost, but also to obtain their machinery and erect it. If we compel them to build the railway we compel them to do the whole thing. The estimated cost of the whole undertaking, I would remind hon. members, is something like £125,000 and it is altogether improbable, even if the war continues, that the concessionaire will sit down and do nothing. I cannot see that there is any inducement in the lease for the concessionaire to do anything except to get to work as quickly as possible. It would be very harsh to impose a condition such as that which has been suggested. I would propose that, as the Minister and the concessionaire are to have a conference, and that as the report stage will not be entered upon until next week, Mr. Ewing might withdraw his amendment for the time being.

**Hon. J. EWING:** I am quite prepared to withdraw the amendment for the time being with a view of seeing what can be placed before the House at a later stage. I have no desire to act harshly in the matter. I want to see this man get the concession. I am not aware who has been responsible for the delay which has taken place but that does not do away with the position we are now in. I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I move an amendment—

*That the following words be added at the end of the clause:—"Provided also that the lessee shall pay to the Crown a royalty of 3d. per ton on all lime or cement-making material removed from the concession, the rental provided for in the agreement merging into such royalty."*

The royalty has been made low so that it shall not hamper the lessee. As a matter of fact, a similar royalty is provided for in the next Bill coming to this House for a similar concession, and if Ministers recognise it is right in that Bill next coming on, surely they will not refuse to allow it to be charged here. If the concessionaire gets absolute control of 4,300 acres of land, apart from the reserve adjoining, surely the Crown should not fix a nominal rental for the development of such an immense property. My amendment is absolutely sound in principle and I submit it will not hamper the lessee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would be a very convenient method of dealing with the amendment if the hon. member would follow the course adopted by Mr. Ewing. If he will withdraw the amendment I will undertake that it will be considered at the conference between the Minister and the lessee, and when we get to the report stage next week the result of the conference will be known. It will still be open to the hon. member then to move his amendment.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I am agreeable to that course being followed, and I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It appears that Mr. Cullen's object is to reserve the Crown right. The lease does that. Mr. Cullen pointed out that the lease provides for the alienation of 4,300 acres. If I know anything of the locality it is not 4,300 acres of land but 4,300 acres of water. Then he proposes that on the lime or cement-making material a royalty shall be paid on that which is raised or removed.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss the amendment; it has been withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Progress reported.

#### PAPERS—KIMBERLEY CATTLE. GOVERNMENT PURCHASE.

Debate resumed from 14th November on motion by Hon. J. J. Holmes, "That the contract for purchase of 12,000 Kimberley cattle for next season's delivery, and all papers in connection therewith, be laid upon the Table of the House."

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central) [5.42]: When I heard Mr. Holmes' speech in support of this motion I was buoyed up with the hope that he had possibly been misinformed and that perhaps the Government had not done what had been laid to their charge. I have listened very carefully to the Colonial Secretary's reply and I must confess, as one who is deeply concerned about the future of the State Steamship Service and its adherence to the purpose for which it was brought into being, that I am gravely disappointed indeed. The Minister admirably succeeded in evading the great point at issue and in confining himself to the secondary phases of the question which had very little bearing on the indictment framed by Mr. Holmes. Stripped of its irrelevancies, and denuded of its invective, the Colonial Secretary's speech was an admission of the truth of Mr. Holmes' statement. The groundwork of the attack made by the mover of the motion was not assailed at all. There was merely an attempt, and in my opinion a weak attempt, to excuse what has been done. Mr. Holmes' chief complaint was that the Government had considered only one firm in connection with the lifting of stock from the North-West by State vessels, that it had purchased 12,000 head of cattle from one firm, and that the request for space from other holders of stock had been absolutely ignored. The Colonial Secretary's speech is a confession that that is so, in spite of the verbiage with which it was clothed. After giving this matter a great deal of consideration I have come to the conclusion that what the Government have done they should not have done. It was an act which, if carefully analysed,

would be found to be unjustifiable and inexcusable. It is not only in direct opposition to the policy on which the State Steamship Service was established, but it is indefensible in my opinion from whatever standpoint it may be viewed. The men who have been blocked from getting space are the men who stood to the State Steamship Service from the very inception, and the men who got space are the men who have never patronised the State Steamship Service at all. They are the men who made State intervention in the shipping business an absolute and pressing necessity. They are the men who have had a monopoly of stock space in the private steamers travelling from the North-West during the course of 20 years, until the Government boats were put on, and they are the men who comprised the old meat ring, as it was known five years ago. They had been given this tremendous advantage over everybody else without there being afforded any opportunity whatever for general competition. It is idle to say, as I believe the Colonial Secretary in defence of the position stated and the Premier also stated, that if the Ministry advertised its desire to buy stock the cattle owners would be in a position to dictate terms. Mr. Holmes has very clearly, effectively, and truthfully pointed out that the Government which had a monopoly of the shipping space, held the key to the situation. What a strange experience, too, in the light of the past. Only last April the Colonial Secretary defended an attack made in his paper against the Scaddan Government, to which I replied and in which the Scaddan Ministry were accused of letting all the space in the State steamers to large growers, to the total exclusion of the small growers. To quote the exact words which were defended by the Colonial Secretary on that occasion, I will read the following:—

It has been repeatedly asserted during the last few months—and never denied—that for the cattle season now opening the Government steamer space has been secured by the cattle kings—the beef buccaneers whom the Government set out to destroy; no small owner will be able to ship away a single hoof, excepting

through the big man, in other words, the owners will have to sell to the big man.

Leaving out Connor, Doherty and Durack, Ltd., for whom we brought down a limited number of stock, that was a gross misstatement as the Colonial Secretary is in a position at the present time to discover. I am not going to be led away into a proof that it was so. I will simply state now that every owner of stock, every small owner as well, was circularised some months previous to that season and given every opportunity to book up stock space. Many small owners did book up space, and afterwards, being in a position to sell their cattle at a great advantage over that which they enjoyed previous to the State steamers being put on, sold their cattle on what they considered very satisfactory terms, and asked the State Steamship Service to cancel their space. We cancelled that space, because we found no difficulty in letting it to others. But no small man during that season or any other season during which the Labour Government were in power, was neglected or could not have had his stock booked in connection with the State Steamship Service. The point I wish to make is that the Colonial Secretary, who controls the State Steamship Service, and who made political capital out of the unfounded allegation that the Labour Government were bringing down stock from the North-West for the beef buccaneers to the exclusion of the small man, is now a member of a Government which have made arrangements by which the only firm which has received consideration is a firm of out-and-out beef buccaneers, who for nearly 20 years held this State in thrall. It is quite true that the Scaddan Government bought cattle from Emanuel Bros. last season and brought them down. That is undeniable and well known. But there were no other cattle offering at the time, and it was done without involving the State Steamship Service in any way whatever. In accordance with my wish, the Government decided that the State Steamship Service should be kept out of the affair entirely. Emanuel Bros.' representative waited upon me in connection with the matter, but I refused to discuss it with him. I referred him to the Agricultural Department, and

that department secured a ship from the Commonwealth Government and lifted these cattle. The cost was estimated at between £4 10s. and £5 per head. Why was this so? I will tell the House. The "Moir," which carried down the stock, had been commandeered by the Commonwealth Government from a private company, and the charter rates had to be on the high basis existing at that time. It was a war basis, the shipping shark basis. That was the reason why it was found necessary to decide that the rate should be on the basis of between £4 10s. and £5 per head. Such a condition did not exist in regard to the State Steamship Service. The boats had not been chartered upon the war basis. They had not been chartered on the basis of their earning capacity overseas. There was consequently no justification for putting up the rates to the same level as those on the vessel, the "Moir," which had been commandeered. The Colonial Secretary says, "We carried stock at a loss last season." I took that down, and I knew there was no loss. There has never been any loss in connection with the carriage of stock from the North-West. When I asked him the amount of the loss he said, "We could have made £1 10s. a head more." The Colonial Secretary reminded me of a Jew I knew in Fremantle many years ago. This man bought pearls for £500 and sold them for £1,000 in France. They were afterwards sold for £2,000, and he reckoned he was a ruined man and that he had lost £1,000. We would have justly forfeited the confidence of the North-West producers if we had fallen into line with the shipping vultures and raised our rates to their standard. When we started we reduced the freights from Wyndham by 10s. a head, and those from Derby by 7s. 6d. per head. Owing to the war and the drought our expenses went up, and we increased the rates by 5s. per head all round. We could have got more certainly. We were in a position to demand more, but, strong as the temptation was, we would not take advantage of the war to grind these people down. Is it fair to do what the Colonial Secretary suggests, namely, arrange the freight on the same basis as the "Moir" which had been chartered upon the shipping boom basis? Some cattle owners last sea-

son made big money, but that was due to the shortage of freight, as everyone knows. What did the Adelaide Steamship Company do in Western Australia, and what did they do in South Australia and Victoria? They took their boats off the inter-State trade and sent them overseas with the object of making greater profits. It has been stated that they were driven off the North-West coast by the State Steamship Service. Were they driven away from South Australia or from Victoria by a State Steamship Service? No. As everybody realises, there are no State steamers there. They went abroad because they knew full well that their profits would heavily increase owing to the larger rates which they would receive for overseas work.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: After living on the Australian public for 30 years.

Hon. J. M. DREW: I would remind hon. members of the fact that the North-West producers did well last season. Is this any warrant for the Government charging them war rates for the carriage of their stock? There is proof on the files of the Colonial Secretary's Department that, apart from Emanuel Bros., firms representing the North-West producers were anxious to ship their cattle by the State Steamship Service and the great majority of them were old customers of the State Steamship Service. They waited upon me on the 28th June last with a request to book 10,000 head of cattle. Besides those who represented the 10,000 head of cattle, there were many small holders who desired to come in. This deputation waited upon me, but I refused to grant their request. I stated to them that I considered it would be improper and indecent for the Government to enter into a contract of that description which would possibly tie the hands of the incoming Government, who had pledged themselves to the abolition of the service. I will read a few extracts from a minute I addressed to the manager of the State Steamship Service in connection with the question—

The deputation pressed me to proceed at once to make the necessary arrangements and to commence booking, but I reiterated what I had told them in the first instance. Mr. Holmes stated that as a result of an interview with the leader of



the Opposition he (Mr. Holmes) was prepared to say that the Liberal Government would not abolish the service—and then he asked me whether I would go ahead, if I had such an assurance from Mr. Wilson himself. I replied that an assurance from such a quarter would make a considerable difference, but that I had my doubts whether the leader of the Opposition would go so far as to bind himself in the matter at this stage. Finally, I promised that I would commence negotiations for chartering a stock ship for next season, but would do nothing to commit the State until the political atmosphere was clearer. The necessity for chartering a suitable ship to bring down stock next year is undeniable, and whatever Government are in power they should take action accordingly. Furthermore, the building of a vessel on the designs prepared by Sir John Biles (except that it should be motor-driven instead of oil-fired) should be undertaken as soon as possible after Parliamentary authority has been obtained, unless the end of the war appears to be in sight and the prospect of a greatly reduced price as a consequence would warrant a little delay. Since writing the above, I have received through my clerk the following telephone message from Mr. Giles (Elder, Shenton & Co.):—

Elder, Shenton & Co. were representing a number of small growers in the North-West and were merely agents. I understand they have no cattle stations at all.

After we met Mr. Drew this morning we thought it as well to call on Mr. Frank Wilson, and, after some trouble, had an interview with him, and explained the position fully. He seemed glad to go into the matter with us, and assured us he would certainly not be a party to breaking up the State steamship arrangement at the present juncture; and he expressed himself as willing to confer with Mr. Drew on the matter with a view to finalising, so that complete arrangements may be at once made for freighting next season's cattle." The telephone message was supplemented by the following:—"Mr. Giles further asked that you be informed—lest you take the inference from 'at the present juncture' that Mr. Wilson may contemplate

breaking up the service at some later date—that he (Mr. Giles) gathered Mr. Wilson has no such intention, and that it seemed 'the other side' now realise the State steamers are serving a useful State purpose." I shall endeavour to arrange the suggested conference with Mr. Wilson, and it should provide a way out of our difficulty.

I saw Mr. Wilson, and had a brief interview with him. As a result I decided that I should do nothing in the direction of letting space. Although Mr. Wilson offered no objection, I could see plainly that his desire was that the matter should be held over. From what I have stated it is clear that the present Government were well aware that in addition to Emanuel Brothers' cattle there were 10,000 head belonging to other owners requiring shipment from the North-West.

The Government were well aware that if these 10,000 cattle were not lifted they would have to remain on the various stations for another twelve months. In view of this knowledge,

it is amazing that the Government should have given consideration to only one firm in the matter of allotment of space. Now the Government are going to force the pastoralists to sell to them. From being unwilling carriers of cattle, the anti-socialistic Government have developed into cheerful dealers in cattle, with sole command of the means of transport. It is a remarkable development, and it is one which I greatly fear will create alarm amongst the settlers of the North-West. Those settlers may this year get the big price which I understand has been paid to Emanuel Brothers; but what will they get next year? Are they prepared to trust the present Government and to trust future Governments? Because that is what it means. But I am confident, after considering the matter closely, that the Government will never be able to lift the cattle with advantage to the State. The Colonial Secretary talks about putting on the "Kangaroo." In my opinion that proposal is most insane—if I may be pardoned for using that word. The cost of putting fittings into the "Kangaroo," with the loss of earnings during the period for which she would be in the hands of the workmen, would run into about £3,000. And then there would be the cost of tearing the fittings out again. And all

this for one, two, or three trips to Derby, as mentioned by the Colonial Secretary. Further, would not the vessel be in a wholesome condition for the carriage of frozen meat from Wyndham after having had in her hold 1,300 head of cattle for one, two, or three trips from Derby! Besides, as Mr. Holmes has pointed out, the "Kangaroo" should next year go to England for the purpose of being insulated, so that she could proceed with the carrying of frozen meat from Wyndham when the works have been erected. If the works are not erected within the next twelve months, then, in my opinion, they will never be erected at all. The "Kangaroo" is not suitable for carrying stock from the North-West. That is a question which I have thoroughly investigated. Many months ago I consulted men who should know, and who I am positive do know, whether the "Kangaroo" is suitable for the cattle trade. The great objection to her being placed in that trade is that she is far too large for the purpose. She would simply swamp the market with cattle, and the cattle would have to be sacrificed. The public would not derive any advantage. The cattle would be purchased at low prices by some of the business men connected with meat matters, and the people of the metropolitan area would derive no advantage at all. I am speaking from a little experience of the business. In the past the "Kwinana" and one of the privately owned steamers have come into Fremantle together, with the result that about 1,200 head of cattle were thrown on the market and had to be sacrificed. I know of instances in which small men who had sent cattle by the State steamers were, owing to this position of affairs having arisen, scarcely able to pay the freight on the cattle. The "Kangaroo" can carry as many cattle as any two vessels on the North-West coast, excluding the "Kwinana." It has happened that the "Kwinana" bringing 800 head was closely followed by one of the privately owned boats, with the result that the market was flooded, to the disadvantage of everyone except the purchasers at auction. The Government must be very hard pressed indeed to know what to do when they decide to put the "Kangaroo" on the North-West trade, presumably as a last resource. Their initial blunder was the granting a monopoly of space to Emanuel

Brothers, and that blunder is leading them into other mistakes. May I be permitted to quote a little philosophy for the benefit of hon. members? There is an old saying that one thing leads to another. Someone, perhaps it was Rudyard Kipling, referred to the condemned murderer who could find no other explanation of his unfortunate predicament than that one thing led to another. The murderer said, "Once a man starts on a crooked course, one thing leads to another, until finally he has to put someone out of the way to put himself straight again." These are not my words, nor are they quoted from some foreign potentate; they are the words of the present Colonial Secretary, who uttered them at a time when he enjoyed that independence which he longs for now. In this cattle transaction one thing is leading to another. From buying Emanuel Brothers' stock, the Government are now forced into buying every one else's stock; and they are now contemplating the putting of the "Kangaroo" into the cattle trade, utterly regardless of consequences. The Colonial Secretary says that the Government will be in a position to control prices, that they will make an arrangement with the retailers. This would be highly amusing if the matter were not so serious. I think the hon. gentleman will find himself up against a very tough proposition. The Scaddan Government had some experience of an arrangement with the retailers. We tried the arrangement for a month. We intended to give the retailer every opportunity to sell meat cheap. We sold it to him at something like 2½d. per pound. That, as I say, went on for a month; but there was not the slightest reduction in the price of meat to the public. So the Scaddan Government started the meat stalls in the metropolitan area. The only way in which the present Government can control the price of meat is to open numerous meat stalls in the metropolitan area. The Scaddan Government opened a few; but the present Government will need to open a hundred, in order to succeed. In other words, the Government must nationalise the meat industry in the large centres of population. I can assure hon. members that I am not without hope that the Government will do so. It has not taken the Govern-

ment very long to blossom forth as wholesale cattle dealers, in which line they have made a very good start indeed. But, to be successful in that line, they must act on the suggestion I have just offered them. This is a most unfortunate piece of business, and it is impossible to foresee what the end will be. A grievous wrong has been done to the old customers of the State Steamship Service, who have been victimised for the benefit of the princes of monopolists; for the benefit of absentee owners who take all their profits out of the State. The committing of that wrong has given a new lease of life to the old meat ring, which we all thought had been effectually scotched. The action taken in this matter comes with very bad grace indeed from Ministers professing grave concern for the advancement of the North-West, Ministers who only recently stated that they proposed to appoint a commissioner for that portion of Western Australia, Ministers who have promised that the North-West shall play a prominent part in their immigration policy. One of the objects of the establishment of the State Steamship Service was the encouragement of pastoral settlement in the North. The Seaddan Government considered that if investors could rely upon getting their stock to market at reasonable rates of freight they would take up country and stock it and so add to the wealth of the State. But that is not now likely to occur. The administration of the State Steamship Service by the present Government has broken faith with the existing settlers, and the announcement of the Government's future line of policy—that they will no longer be carriers of cattle, but buyers of cattle—is likely to create serious alarm among the producers in the Northern portion of this State. The final result of such a policy may be that very soon someone else will have to step in for the purpose of protecting the Northern producers from the State Steamship Service and the voracity of the Government, by providing competition. The Colonial Secretary stated that he had no objection to laying on the Table of the House the papers asked for by this motion. In my opinion, it is a pity that the hon. gentleman did not do so straight away, in which case we would be in a position to judge of the merits of

the transaction. But the merits, whatever they may be, do not, in my opinion, affect the question under consideration. They cannot excuse the Government for having cruelly abandoned the men who have stood by the State Steamship Service in the past, or for having extended preferential treatment to the men who have never given any assistance whatever to that project. To sum up the whole situation in one sentence—the friends of the State Steamship Service have been thrown to the wolves in order to provide a safe seat for the enemies of that enterprise.

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.*

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*Tuesday, 21st November, 1916.*

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

### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Honorary Minister: By-laws of the City of Perth.

By the Premier: Reports of Advisory Committee on the funding of the deficit.