

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Perhaps you have agreed to it at a joint party meeting.

The Minister for Agriculture: I will take the responsibility for it.

Mr. Marshall: But you have to do what the executive tells you.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is of importance to the so-called representatives of farming districts. Therefore I hope the Premier will defer it till to-morrow, for to press the motion now is to take an unfair advantage of his Country Party supporters, of whom so few are left in the House.

The Premier: Your last train has gone.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

Library: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Collier, and Mr. Mr. J. MacCallum-Smith.

Standing Orders: Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Durack, Mr. Money, and Hon. T. Walker.

House: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Mullany, Mr. O'Loughlen, and Mr. Teesdale.

Printing: Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Loughlen, and Mr. J. MacCallum-Smith.

House adjourned at 12.5 a.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 1st August, 1923.

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

QUESTION—SCHOOL SITE, BIBRA.

Hon. G. POTTER asked the Minister for Education: 1, Have the Government received as a gift, three acres of land situated at the junction of Warwick road and North Lake road in the Bibra and North Lake district? 2, What conditions, if any, governed the gift? 3, When will the Government comply with the conditions?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, The condition was that a school should be erected within twelve months, dating from 31st August, 1922. 3, The work will be carried out as soon as possible.

QUESTION—IRWIN COALFIELD.

Hon. T. MOORE asked the Minister for Education: In view of the favourable indications discovered by the Government boring party on the Irwin coalfield some months ago, do the Government intend to proceed further with boring operations there?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: When boring was discontinued it was decided that, should the Government again assist in this direction, it would only be on the distinct understanding that the owners of the land on which the bores were put down would agree to repay the whole of the expenditure incurred in regard to such bores should the coal seams be worked; this for the reason that the titles to the land did not contain a reservation of coal to the Crown, and therefore it is the property of the freeholder. Consequently Government expenditure with such a stipulation would mean that the Government was proving the value of the coal measures owned by land owners. This decision was intimated to the parties concerned, but so far no consent has been forthcoming.

QUESTION—YUNA-MULLEWA RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Hon. T. MOORE asked the Minister for Education: 1, Have the Government decided to send the Railway Advisory Board to inspect the land along the route of the proposed Yuna-Mullewa railway extension? 2, If so, when?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, As soon as possible.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Minister for Education sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

Standing Orders.—The President, the Minister for Education, the Chairman of Committees, Hons. J. Nicholson and A. Lovekin.

Library.—The President, Hons. A. J. H. Saw and H. Stewart.

Printing.—The President, Hons. A. Lovekin and T. Moore.

House Committee.—The President, Hons. J. W. Kirwan, J. Cornell, J. W. Hickey, and G. Potter.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £1,790,600.

All Stages.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [4.40]: In accordance with notice given, I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to be received from the Legislative Assembly, and to be passed through all its stages at one sitting.

Question put and passed.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [4.41] in moving the second reading said: I think I am correct in stating that three Supply Bills were presented to this House during last session, these being necessary on account of the Estimates of revenue and expenditure not having been agreed to by another place until somewhat late in the session. This Supply Bill, amounting to £1,790,600, provides for the following appropriations: from Consolidated Revenue £799,000, from General Loan Fund £668,000, from Government Property Sales Fund £18,600, from Land Improvement Loan Fund £5,000, and Treasurer's advance £300,000. It is not my intention this afternoon to speak at any great length, because I shall have an opportunity on the Address-in-reply to go thoroughly and clearly into the financial position of the State and place it before members in a way that I hope will be satisfactory.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You are taking on a big contract.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The amount asked for is based on the expenditure of last year for a similar period, and represents Supply for two months only, the months of July and August. It is necessary to ask for this Supply, because the Estimates of revenue and expenditure have not yet been presented to another place. Last year the Estimates were presented to another place very much earlier than had been the case in previous years, and I anticipate that owing to the forward state in which the Treasurer has the accounts this year, he will be able to introduce his Estimates earlier than ever before in the history of the State. Of course, he cannot present his Estimates until the debate on the Address-in-reply has been concluded, but I confidently believe that almost

immediately after the Address-in-reply has been disposed of, he will present his Estimates to another place. The consideration of the Estimates by another place occupies a considerable time, and it has been our unfortunate experience, so long as I have been a member of this House, for the Appropriation Bill, which gives members of this House an opportunity to thoroughly discuss the finances of the State, to be delayed to an extent which has been regrettable. On this occasion I believe that members in another place are so earnestly desirous of expediting their part of the work that I shall have an opportunity to introduce the Appropriation Bill here much earlier than has hitherto been the case. If my expectation is not realised, it will not be my fault. I would be prepared to move the Appropriation Bill in this Chamber within a month in the hope of our being able to go into recess earlier than usual. We, however, are entirely in the hands of another place, but I believe the Government will be able to manage the business in such a way that the Appropriation Bill will reach us comparatively early and that there will be no cause for criticism on this score. The financial position of Western Australia is well known to members. The Treasurer estimated that at the end of the financial year 1922-23 there would be a deficit of £389,609. That estimate was not realised. The actual amount of the deficit for the year was £405,351, an underestimate of £15,742. Notwithstanding what I shall say in a few moments, the Treasurer certainly made a very close estimate to get within £15,742 of the actual figures. But when the Treasurer was getting his Estimates together, he fully relied on an amount of £116,000 from license fees. As hon. members know, the result of last session's licensing legislation was such as to reduce the amount received from fees to £54,654, showing the very considerable shortage of £61,346. This was rather a blow to the Treasurer. Again, the Hospitals Bill did not materialise, which meant an additional expenditure for medical services of £53,000 above the estimate.

Hon. H. Stewart: That was because the Treasurer did not stand to his guns.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The amount of revenue received by the Treasurer was, in consequence of these two facts, reduced by £114,346. Had the Treasurer received that amount the deficit for the last financial year would have been, not £389,609, but probably about £289,000, or £100,000 less. Hon. members can see quite clearly what a marked effect the amendment of the two Bills in question had upon the financial affairs of this State. As representative of a Government seized with the seriousness of the financial position not only of Western Australia, but of countries all over the world, I think it can be truthfully stated that the position of this community has vastly improved, and that the Treasurer and the Government generally are to be congratulated upon that improvement. Just this morning I observed the

results for the month of July. Seeing that the financial year really does not end until the 10th July, there is usually a huge deficit for that month. There is a deficit for July this year, but it is not so serious as in the past. The expenditure for July, 1923, was £479,333, and the revenue £298,183, showing a deficit for the month of £181,150. The deficit for July of 1922 was £211,381; so that we are better off to the extent of over £30,000. That is a gratifying position, indicating that improvement in the financial position of the State is progressing satisfactorily. I do not know whether it appeals to hon. members in that way, but that is how it appeals to me; and as representative of the Government in this House, I am glad to see that the position is being maintained, and hope that at the end of the present financial year we shall see a considerable additional improvement. The fact that the revenue for July has improved to the extent of £29,000 must be pleasing to hon. members, as showing the vitality of the State.

Hon. H. Stewart: The loan expenditure is reflected.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I will deal with the loan expenditure in a few moments. Hon. members will realise that I am somewhat new to this position, the present being the first occasion on which I have had to speak on the finances of the State as representative of the Government. The revenue has been only £52,850 short of what was anticipated, and that deficiency is more than counter-balanced by the shortage of licensing receipts. The loss of revenue consequent on the amendment of the Licensing Act Amendment Bill as introduced amounted to £61,346. The expenditure for the last financial year was £37,108 less than the estimate. That fact is, in my opinion, something to congratulate the Government upon. They are taking the greatest care of the finances of the State, and are economising wherever possible; and the result is that during the last 12 months there has been a reduction of expenditure satisfactory to Ministers and, I venture to say, satisfactory to the people of the State. Whereas in 1921-22 we had a deficit of £732,135, for the last financial year we had a deficit of £405,351, showing an improvement of £326,784. It has been said in this House and elsewhere that Western Australia is spending so many thousand pounds per day and is fast going to bankruptcy. Well, we are not spending so much per day as previously.

Hon. J. Duffell: You are not spending much less at Wyndham.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am quite prepared to meet criticisms when they come in an individual form here, but for the moment I shall not discuss the Wyndham Meat Works or any other special works, because my knowledge of hon. members satisfies me that I shall have another opportunity of doing so. I would emphasise the fact that the consideration of hon. members is due to the Government for having made a decided

and earnest effort to relieve the finances, although not curtailing expenditure on developmental works and continuing to pay interest. The revenue for the past year having increased by £209,821, and the expenditure having decreased by £34,242, there has been a total improvement of £244,063. It is very cheering to me on this, my initial introduction of a financial proposal to this House, to be in a better position than my predecessor has been for many years, and to be able to tell hon. members, and through them the public, that the financial position is improving as evidenced by the figures which I have quoted and shall quote. Public utilities have for years been very unsatisfactory. Our railways have lost enormous amounts of money, and vast sums have been lost by other utilities. Again, it is very pleasant to be able to inform hon. members that the position regarding public utilities has improved to the extent of £237,761. Every member of this House will say that that is satisfactory.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: There is still a chance for the State.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think the hon. member will agree that the figures I am quoting this afternoon are satisfactory to the people of Western Australia. I do not know what the improvement was last year, but I do not think there was anything like this.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The improvement is in the railways, I take it?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is in the railways, the tramways, and other public utilities. Before I resume my seat I shall refer further to the railways, because they are a great and important factor in the carrying on of the affairs of this State. The amount of the improvement to which I have referred, £237,671, is made up of increased revenue £106,856, and decreased expenditure £130,905. The improvement is very largely in the Railway Department, as Mr. Nicholson has suggested. I ask, is not the improvement gratifying to the people of Western Australia? There has been as much work done as before, and for a decreased expenditure.

Hon. J. A. Greig: Does not that mean maladministration in the past?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not know about maladministration. The Premier has been doing his utmost for the past three or four years to straighten out the finances of Western Australia. I am in a position to-day to assure hon. members that they may rest satisfied that there has been no undue cutting down of expenditure, but that all work of a developmental character, all work of a character necessary for the advancement of the State, is being provided for by the Premier in his position as Treasurer. I am glad to be able to say these things. I take no credit for them to myself, seeing that I am only a fledgling in the Ministry. I say that all this has been accomplished by those who were in office last year. It is a pleasing thing for me to be able to say that if I were sitting in my old position on the floor of this Chamber, I should use practically

the same expressions as I have uttered now in my position of representative of the Government. In respect of trading concerns, there has been a falling off in receipts of £16,292. Hon. members know my attitude towards the trading concerns. However, I am not going to speak on that subject this afternoon. Hon. members may want to know why I am in Ministerial position since I have so consistently opposed the trading concerns. I hope that when the time comes I shall be able to give a satisfactory explanation. The only trading concern over which I, as a Minister, have any jurisdiction, is the Wyndham Meat Works. I am informed that there is among experts a very high appreciation of the methods employed at those works. Although as a private member I criticised the works, I feel that perhaps I went rather far in my criticism of the management. I am now satisfied that the manager is steadfastly looking after the interests of Western Australia and doing what he can with a trading concern which is of a very unsatisfactory nature.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Then I did not select the wrong man after all?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the hon. member selected Mr. McGhie as manager, I congratulate the hon. member.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It has been a long time coming.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It may have been. Private members sometimes say things for which they have not full warrant, and in consequence their criticism is not always fair. It is not possible for any private member to get to the bottom of this trading concern.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Appoint us all Ministers.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member would make a very satisfactory one, I am sure. Yesterday, in answer to Mr. Lovekin's question, the position in respect of the Wyndham Meat Works was placed clearly before hon. members. This year I hope the position will be even better than it has been. Loan expenditure last year amounted to £3,687,007. Some may think that a large sum for Western Australia, but I do not agree with them. I hold that so long as the money is wisely spent, the position is perfectly satisfactory. The loan moneys spent last year will serve to enhance the State's productivity and its prosperity. No less than 69 per cent. of the money expended was devoted to mining and agriculture. In all, £2,368,428 of Loan Fund was spent on the development of agriculture. A few years ago less than half the sum would have been so spent. A fair proportion of the money, of course, was devoted to soldier settlement, to opening up the country and to various settlement schemes. It is a safe investment, for the money will all come back, bringing with it enhanced prosperity.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Why, then, do the Country Party seek to oppose the National Party?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think they are a very happy family alto-

gether. The Country Party have no desire to impede the progress of the country, and I feel sure they are well satisfied with the Government. At least, I hope so. From Loan Funds £64,228 was spent on mining. Mr. Ardagh yesterday criticised the Government on the expenditure on the goldfields. I am satisfied that the Government are going to look well after the mining industry.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: That will be a change.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No. During this session something of a valuable nature will be forthcoming to assist mining. The Premier recognises that we owe the birth of the State to the gold mining industry.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: When did he get that inspiration?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think he has had it always. He is endeavouring to find some way out of the difficulty. Conditions have changed, and it is not easy for gold mining companies to work at a profit, the cost of all necessities and of wages having risen, while the value of the gold remains practically the same. The Government are up against a difficult proposition but, as I say, something satisfactory to the goldfields will be forthcoming this session.

Hon. H. Stewart: A statement without prejudice!

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am not going to make a statement of an official character unless I have the authority of the Premier to do so. I am expressing the hope that it will be possible for the Government to so conduct the affairs of the State as to save certain moneys—gold mining members will know exactly what I mean—and that in consequence it may be possible to do something definite for the industry.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The mining industry was practically ignored in the Governor's Speech.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It does not follow that because mining is not mentioned in the Speech it is ignored. If it is ignored in the Speech, it is in no way ignored by the Government. The Government are making full inquiries—

Hon. J. W. Hickey: To be continued in our next.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, to be continued because we know it is in the interests of the State that the industry should be fostered. The difficulty is that there are low grade propositions, and that the higher grade ore has to be used to sweeten the low grade metal, instead of being held in reserve. We are trying to find a way by which the low grade propositions may be worked to advantage.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The mining industry would not have been ignored had Mr. Colebatch written the Speech, as usual.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not know that Mr. Colebatch ever wrote the Governor's Speech.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Then everybody else does.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Not unless Cabinet secrets leak out, and I am sure

they do not. No one here knows officially that Mr. Colebatch wrote the Governor's Speech. Of course, we all know how competent he was.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: None could have done it better.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I agree with that. I shall have an opportunity, on the Address-in-reply, to pay a tribute to my predecessor in office.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We can see by this Speech that Mr. Colebatch is no longer here.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think the Speech is a very clear statement of fact, easily understood. Mr. Kirwan says the gold mining industry has been ignored in the Speech. I say it has not been ignored in a way to prejudice the industry; because the Government are going to look after the development of that industry, and are determined to do what is right. From loan moneys Tramways, Electricity and Railways have benefited to the extent of £652,506. Hon. members have noticed an improvement in Public Utilities. That improvement is reflected in these departments, particularly in the Railways. It is a clear index of the prosperity of Western Australia. If there is plenty of produce to go forward and of merchandise to go out, the Railways are busy. They could not improve their position unless there was business doing. For many years past the tramways have been losing money. In 1921 the loss amounted to £9,334. In 1922 there was a marked improvement, when a profit of £3,835 was shown.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is that net?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes.

Hon. J. Cornell: That was effected by charging double fares on Sundays.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In 1923 the profit amounted to £8,342. For the period with which I am dealing the improvement represents £17,676. If that is not satisfactory, I do not know what is.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What return on the capital invested does it represent?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have not gone into that. I am only seeking to show that the management has been such as to bring about these splendid results. When speaking on the Address-in-reply I shall have the figures in detail, and will endeavour to answer all questions. As a private member I criticised the Electricity Department and moved motions with a view to having certain things done. Perhaps I was not fully justified in all that I said. Just the same, I still think those things should be done, and I hope the Government will realise it in the near future. I criticised the management of the Electricity Department, although not to any great extent. The manager and the Minister are now doing what I asked the House to allow them to do, namely, make inquiries. We should have regard to what may happen in two or three years' time. If we can then do that we can put forth our endeavours to meet the position. There are not many who are gifted with such a sense. It has been realised, however, that it is necessary to make inquiries into this important

question. Probably something in the nature I have advocated may subsequently be brought about.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is a case of coming to curse and remaining to pray.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The loss on electricity in 1921 was £9,560. In 1922 the loss was only £562, making an improvement of roughly £9,000 in that period. In 1923 the profit was £2,871 after the payment of interest, and antiquation charges, making an improvement of £12,431 over the years I have mentioned. This is a tribute to those who are managing the electricity department. The blessing of heat and light is being extended all over the metropolitan area right into the hills. I hope in the near future those who are living in the country, those who are desirous of making their farming operations cheaper, will have the same blessings as people are now enjoying in the metropolitan area. That is what I am aiming at. It may be aiming rather high for the present, but I think the time will come when this will be brought about. So sure as I am addressing this House to-day, the time is not far distant when the blessing of electricity will be spread throughout the length and breadth of the country to the advantage of the people of the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: Have the Government given any consideration to obtaining the views of Sir John Monash on the scheme in general?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not know. I realise that his opinion would be valuable, and speaking as an individual I should be pleased if he could be called in to consult with our present management. No doubt something valuable would be evolved from such a discussion. Our present manager, Mr. Taylor is, of course, a thoroughly competent man.

Hon. J. Cornell: The other is a big man.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The railway system has been severely criticised. A Royal Commission was appointed, and I think the result of the inquiry has been beneficial to Western Australia. It is evidence of the good that comes of full inquiries of this nature. The investigation was conducted in no way to the disadvantage of those in control of the system, but the position has been materially improved by the report of the Royal Commissioner. In 1920-21 the surplus of earnings over working expenses was £298,028. The surplus of earnings over working expenses in 1921-22 was £499,013. In 1922-23 the surplus of earnings over working expenses was £705,637. This shows an improvement in the last financial year over the first period I have mentioned of £407,609 and over the year 1921-22 of £206,624. Members will thus be satisfied that something has been done in the railways for the position to have improved to this extent. It is interesting to look at the loss on the railways for the last three years. In 1921 the loss was £418,370; in 1922 the loss was £257,724, showing a considerable improvement over the former year and that the good work was going on all the

time. In 1923 the loss was £62,607. That is not a bad record. In fact it is a vast improvement. Members may say that the rates are too high, and so forth. We cannot have the reduction in rates and freights until the position warrants it. The railways after paying interest and working expenses showed a net loss in the last financial year of £62,607. I remember, when I was in another place years ago, I was pleased to quote a profit on the railways of £130,000. Since then we have had troubles and tribulations and have thus reached the position we are now in.

Hon. J. Duffell: What about maintenance and rolling stock?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: These contingencies have been provided for out of the sums I have mentioned. As I have already said there has also been a certain amount of loan expenditure on the railways. During this year, unfortunately for the service, there were some serious floods in the Great Southern districts. These floods cost the Railway Department a considerable sum of money.

Hon. H. Stewart: Was that money debited up to last year?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It was expenditure which would not have been incurred but for the floods, and has affected the financial results to a certain extent, seeing that it was not foreseen by the department.

Hon. J. A. Greig: The expenditure was not met until July.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is all paid for. It has been met out of the figures I have given. The interest bill for the department has been increased during 1922-23 by a sum of £11,507. All things considered, members will be satisfied that the activities of the State have very considerably improved for such an excellent result to have been brought about. The revenue has improved and the expenditure has been decreased, leaving a loss of not more than £130,000. The whole position reflects the greatest credit upon the Railway Commissioner, his staff, and the employees. It is no use the Commissioner or his staff working well and endeavouring to improve the position of our State if the employees do not also assist. The employees have assisted and have loyally stood by the Commissioner and his staff. Things have had to be done which perhaps did not please them, but in the interests of the State they have been loyal to their positions and have done good work.

Hon. H. Stewart: What about some appreciation for the customers of the railways who are responsible for a great deal of this result?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I might have included them. No doubt the activities of the State are shown through the railway service. Our prosperity generally and the development of our industries have made a very forward movement. The expenditure has also been reduced and we have reached a more happy position than we have seen for many years. In looking through the

debates on the Supply Bills, I have been impressed by the fact that when the Leader of the House has brought down such a Bill and said nothing about it, the debate has been of considerable length. Mr. Holmes, for instance, has freely criticised the position and other members have done the same. When, however, the Leader of the House has made a statement which was considered to have cleared up a number of doubts in the minds of members, they have been satisfied and the debate has been not nearly so long.

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Colebatch was a seasoned warrior.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not mean to suggest that because of my few remarks members should not criticise the position for themselves. I shall be only too pleased if members will say all they have to say, and enable me to find out what is to be found out. I may be ignorant of many questions which are familiar to members. It has been a pleasure to me to make these few remarks in the hope that I may have interested the House. I may have neglected to speak upon certain matters which are of vital importance to members, but if those subjects are mentioned on the Address-in-reply I shall give my earnest consideration to them and endeavour in my reply to enlighten the House as far as it is possible to do. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. SEDDON (North-East) [5.27]: I have a few suggestions to make in dealing with future Supply Bills. We may consider ourselves in the light of directors of a company or business. We have before us certain demands for money with which to carry on the business of State. It would be an advantage if we could have placed before us on the Estimates a series of comparative statistics, somewhat on the lines of the figures that have been placed before us in connection with the railways. We would then have some idea of the way in which our business was being conducted from year to year, more particularly in regard to the efficiency of the departments. This sort of thing would be vitally necessary in the carrying on of any commercial business. There have been certain criticisms of departments. No doubt these have been justified more or less. One has heard of cases of departmental heads who have increased their staff in order to improve their own classifications to a degree higher than would otherwise have been the case. In the circumstances a certain amount of information concerning those departments would be very useful, and would show whether any undue inflation was taking place. We could also by this means determine whether the work in any department was increasing out of all proportion to the staff engaged, and so meet the difficulties there in due time. The relative production per head in the State has been worked out for the years 1914 to 1922. In 1914 the production per head was £47.8 and in 1922 it was £66.9. The highest year was 1919, when the production per head was

£69.2. These figures are interesting. They imply that we have made considerable progress. They are supported by the statements concerning our railway earnings, which go far to confirm these figures. The railways are recognised as being one of the safest criterions by which to judge as to the progress of the country. When we correct the production figures by taking as a basis the year 1911 and compare relative productive activity, we get different figures. When prices are inflated, it is not safe to compare that particular year with any other year in which the prices were low. We therefore correct the figures by taking the relative productive activity. Thus, for the year 1914 when prices were lower, the production per head worked out at £47.5 and in 1922 it worked out at £57.4.

Hon. H. Stewart: What was it in 1919?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It works out at £51.0. Last year there is an improvement shown in the production per head. That is a matter for congratulation, because it shows that people are waking up to the necessity for increased production and increased efficiency. It is interesting to note at this point that the wheat yield per acre varies but little. Last year it was considerably less than usual, while this year there is again an increase. By comparative statistics, which are the criterion of true progress, we are able to judge the advancement of the State better than by means of any other comparison. There are several methods of economy and improved business organisation which could be introduced in connection with the Government departments. Some of these have been tried in America and have been found very effective. There they have gone into the way men work, and have studied questions of light, temperature and ventilation, transport, rest and fatigue. They have incurred considerable expenditure in effecting improvements along these lines and they have found out the best conditions under which men can work. The result has been a considerable increase in the output per head, and the economies effected by means of these changes have more than compensated for the expenditure incurred. Then again they have studied motion and the time taken by workers on different jobs and the effect these things have on the individual workers. Improvements along these lines, tending in the direction of standardisation, have also been made, with beneficial results. Dealing with the Supply Bill, one point to be stressed is that Government departments should be placed on an up-to-date basis with adequate equipment. There is more progress to be made in the direction of increased production and improved efficiency by the installation of up-to-date equipment and improved machinery than can be achieved by any other means. By attending to these matters we may increase expenditure for the time being, but the added efficiency and the economies effected subsequently more than repay that expenditure. There is one department to which the Min-

ister referred specially in introducing the Bill—the Railway Department. There is no Government department where it is more necessary to take a broad view of its activities than in that branch of the Government operations. Although economies have been effected, and careful attention given to the question of expenditure, there is one matter which will have to be faced immediately if our railways are to cope with the increased traffic to be expected from the additional settlement on the land. I refer to the question of re-locating or regrading our railways. That is a very important matter. It has been suggested that we should get more powerful engines, and it has also been proposed that we should electrify our railways. Greater economies, however, can be achieved by regrading our railways than by any other means. The ruling grade on the railway line between Perth and Northam is 1 in 40. That grade limits the hauling power of our locomotives. Take the smallest class of engine on our railways—the “G” class. Hon. members will be interested to know that the hauling power of that type of engine is only 105 tons, while our most powerful engine—the “M” class—takes a load of 235 tons on the grade quoted. If the grade were reduced to 1 in 300, the hauling power of the “G” class engine would be increased from 105 tons to 500 tons and of the “M” class engine, from 235 to 1,000 tons.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The American railways had to face this position. There they found that the engineering conditions, even in the mountainous country, were not so heavy as to unduly penalise the system by reason of the expenditure incurred. The beneficial results accruing were extraordinary. From time to time it has been pointed out that we can secure easier grades for our railways than those in use at the present time. The ruling grade between Brunswick and Collie is 1 in 40. To remedy this position and secure the regrading of our railways is only a matter of civil engineering and careful and thorough surveying. Considering that our hills are not at all high, the engineering difficulties should not be great and it should not be impossible to obtain far better grades than those obtaining now. When the Canadian-Northern railway line was constructed, the grade was fixed at 1 in 250, and even in the Rocky Mountains there was only one small portion where the grade was 1 in 100. The advantages that accrued from the improved grading, represented by reduced cost in operating and low freights, more than compensated for the expenditure on the low grading. There are no great engineering difficulties in connection with our railways throughout our whole system, but merely matters of careful surveying and engineering. If this matter were attended to there would be an enormous reduction in working costs. When the world's markets return to their pre-war basis, there will be a considerable reduction in the prices obtainable for our wheat. In these circum-

stances it will be necessary to land our wheat at the ports at the lowest possible cost to enable it to compete in the markets of the world. To achieve this, our railways must be so equipped as to carry freight at the lowest rates. The same thing applies to our coal, which is the life-blood of our industries, the basis of cheap power and a most valuable industry. It should be delivered at the ports at the cheapest possible figure so as to compete with the higher grade coal obtainable in other States. I commend to the Government the desirability of considering the re-grading of our railways so as to bring them up to date, with a view to effecting a reduction in operating charges, and for the benefit of the whole State. We must recognise that Western Australia is a primary producing country, and that being so, the best means of increasing the prosperity of the State is to develop the primary industries, helping those industries to become profitable and thus inducing people to enter upon them. Such a course would be the best immigration scheme to be propounded. If we make our industries attractive, people will rush into them. If, however, people see nothing but hardships, all the inducements offered will fail, because people will not participate in those industries. I mention these matters in discussing this Bill, because they are such that the Government should consider in framing their Estimates. Then again, we must remember that the new Commissioner in South Australia is introducing the latest methods, and later on, when figures are produced, we will be forced to take action, and we may be forced to do so at a time when, owing to congestion, it will represent much greater expense to the State and when it may be most inconvenient to do so. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.37]: A Supply Bill is a measure of first class importance and I do not know whether we are quite justified in proceeding to finish the debate at one sitting. We are asked to vote £1,790,000 of public moneys, and we have not had one word of information as to how it is proposed to expend that money. It is usually stated when a Supply Bill is introduced, that the expenditure is to be on the same lines as the estimates which have been submitted previously. While that is quite good as regards some portion of the funds which it is proposed to vote to the Government—I refer to the payments to civil servants and such like expenditure—it is scarcely the proper way to secure authority to spend loan moneys. Included in the sum asked for is £668,000 to be expended from loan funds. What is that money to be expended upon? Is Parliament not to know how that £668,000 is to be expended? Again, we are asked to vote £300,000 for the Treasurer's advance account. The usual amount voted for the year is £400,000, but in this Bill we are asked to vote £300,000 for two months' Supply. If we are usually asked for £400,000 for 12 months, why are we asked for authority for £300,000 to last for two months? Why

is so much required for so short a period? Such Bills, it seems to me, reduce Parliament, more or less, to a farce. We have a great fuss made during the first days of the session, when we are told we must pass the Supply Bill to give the Government the opportunity of paying out. As a matter of fact, we know that the Government are paying out all along without any authority whatever. It is common knowledge that the Government are committed to an expenditure of £383,000 on the provision of a water supply for Perth. They have let a contract for the construction of a reservoir on Mt. Eliza which is to cost £62,000. The Government have no authority from Parliament to construct such a reservoir; neither have they any authorisation to procure such money. I do not intend to move the adjournment of the debate because, although the Minister has given us a mass of figures, he has given them without prejudice.

The Minister for Education: You can rely on those figures absolutely. I stand by them.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Even so, some of the figures presented by the Minister can be challenged. I will not move for the adjournment of the debate so that I may traverse the whole of the Minister's figures. I will just take one or two items and refer to them. I do not wish to detract from the work which the present Premier has been doing for Western Australia, but the Leader of the House has tried to cover up the inaccuracies in the Premier's previous Estimates. He tells us that the deficiency is more than it would have been, by practically £112,000 made up of £52,000 under the Licensing Act and £61,000 on account of hospitals.

The Minister for Education: The figure is nearer £114,000.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: To be accurate, it is £113,875. The Minister however forgets to tell us that in previous years the income taxes were payable in two moieties. Last year there was no provision for the payment of a moiety in each six months, and the Government received the taxes in a lump sum. The result is that when the financial year ended on 30th June last, the Treasurer had practically the whole of the year's taxation which gave him £102,000 more than he would have received under the previous moiety system. That nearly wipes out the £113,000 by which extent the Treasurer's Estimates fell short.

The Minister for Education: Not much difference.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The £102,000 which the Government would not have got under the moiety system has been received. A good deal has been said about the wonderful progress that has lately been made by the railways, but we must not forget that this year we embarked upon the largest loan expenditure undertaken in any one year, and we all know that the expenditure of loan funds is always largely reflected in the railway returns. There is considerable carriage of goods required in connection with the works being constructed, and in this way the railway revenue gets a

lift. We can easily inflate railway revenue by methods of that description.

The Minister for Education: That must continue.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Of course, so long as we continue to spend loan money. If we spend 10 millions next year, we will not know our railways. Every officer in the department will be able to get a handsome increase in salary. The Minister referred to the Wyndham Meat Works. The report of last year's select committee on that State undertaking does not cast any reflection on either Mr. McGhie or Mr. Tipping, and there was no intention on the part of the committee to do so. I was a member of that committee and we were unanimous in the view that both Mr. McGhie and Mr. Tipping were very able officers and were doing the best they could in the circumstances. What the committee complained about was the works, which are an impossible proposition. The Minister also referred to the Electricity Department and told the House that this year a profit had been made. It will be remembered that an inquiry into this concern was held last year and it was proved that the loss shown was really not a loss, if the balance sheet was analysed, because the works had taken a large sum and placed it to the credit of the obsolescence fund. The Electricity Department has a large credit balance at the Treasury, out of which it has been making purchases, and quite recently the department bought a new unit. There is no need to say anything further at the present time, because I can do no good even were I to attempt to throw out the Bill. It is the usual Bill that comes forward. We are reducing Parliament to a farce by voting a million and a quarter of money without knowing on what it is to be expended, except perhaps the salaries of civil servants. I enter my protest; I do not know that I can do anything more.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, ELECTION.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [5.50]: I move—

That the Hon. J. W. Kirwan do take the Chair as Chairman of Committees.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [5.52]: I desire to offer you, Mr. Kirwan, my sincere congratulations on your having been appointed to the important office of Chairman of Committees. All the members of the House will, I feel sure, agree that you will discharge the duties associated with the office with credit to yourself and with advantage to the House. I wish you a successful career in the position you have been elected to fill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.53]: I join the Minister in offering you, Mr. Chairman, my congratulations on your appointment. I feel sure that while you occupy that position you will discharge the duties of the office impartially and that you will interpret the Standing Orders reasonably and intelligently.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.54]: Permit me also to offer you my congratulations on your elevation to the office of Chairman of Committees. I can assure you that if any act of mine, or any assistance I can render, will facilitate the carrying out of the functions of the office of Chairman, which functions you are so ably qualified to perform, I shall not be found wanting. I feel confident that your early association with the Federal Parliament and the post of Deputy Chairman of Committees which you filled in the Senate, together with your long connection with the Legislative Council of this State, will enable you to discharge the duties of your new office with satisfaction to yourself and to the members of the Chamber.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.55]: I desire to express my appreciation and my thanks to hon. members for the honour they have done me in electing me to the position of Chairman of Committees. I feel that I am following a number of men who have set a very high standard of efficiency in connection with the position. My task in endeavouring to emulate my predecessors has been rendered somewhat easy because I know that the members of the Chamber are very jealous of the high reputation the Chamber has for good order and for the business-like and prompt way in which it gets through the work that is placed before it. I shall endeavour, whilst occupying this position, to correctly interpret the Standing Orders and to administer them fairly, and it will be my endeavour to prove that I am not unworthy of the confidence hon. members have reposed in me.

BILL—SUPPLY.

In Committee, etc.

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

Read a third time and passed.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [5.58]: I first desire to thank the Minister for making available certain papers, the production of which I intended to move for. I appreciate very much the Minister's action in this direction. My intention is to impress upon members the importance of constructing the railway from Pithara eastward. The advisory board ex-

amined the country through which the suggested line will pass, and in addition various officers have reported on that part of the State. Yet, the position has not been advanced in the slightest degree. There are a number of people in that area and they have been in occupation of their land for many years. Some eight or nine are established on big properties, but those properties cannot be made to pay because of the absence of transport facilities. The sooner the Government can be induced to construct this line, the better it will be for the people concerned and the State generally. The whole of the country between the existing railway and the rabbit-proof fence has been applied for and within the last 12 months thousands of acres on the other side of the rabbit-proof fence have been selected. A few wealthy people who have land in that part of the State are 23 miles from the existing railway. They are effecting some improvements but a great number of those who are there should be dependent upon the Agricultural Bank. The bank radius, however, is 12½ miles, and therefore assistance cannot be given. The country is really magnificent; I do not know that I have ever seen any better. The Governor's Speech indicates that last year nine railways were either constructed or were in course of construction, and that three others were being investigated. Of the nine there is not one of them north of Watheroo. At the same time there are two railways for which members have been agitating for some years, the extension of the Ajana line to the Surprise mine and the extension of the Yuna line into the valley of the Greenough, and no mention is made of them in the Speech. Evidently there is no intention on the part of the Government to do anything in connection with those two proposals. The fact that nine railways are being constructed and that three others are being inquired into makes it obvious that the Government's railway activities are confined to the south end of the State. The Surprise mine is one of the best lead mines we have ever had in Western Australia, but the handling and carting charges for the first 10 miles exceed the railway charges to Fremantle. We desire an extension of the Yuna railway for a distance of 12 or 15 miles into the valley of the Greenough River, but it is useless for men to settle out there until communication is provided. I wish the Premier would turn his attention to the estates in the Midland and up to Mullewa. Last year I pointed out that there were 20 big estates aggregating 200,000 acres, a great portion of which consists of first-class agricultural land held for the purpose of grazing stock. Although the owners are not anxious to get rid of their properties, if they were approached in a fair way, I do not think one of them would object to sell at a reasonable price. At the present time the Government's activities are confined to the South-West, and I am extremely sorry that the Premier has practically set aside his work in the wheat belt. I know he has made available through the Agricultural Bank a lot of money for

clearing work, but he is concentrating his activities in the South-West.

The Minister for Education: His activities cover both.

Hon. J. MILLS: I am afraid his affection for the wheat belt is waning. This land in the Midland areas should be developed. It is magnificent land; it is already served by railway; it has a good climate and sufficient rainfall. At the northern end is the port of Geraldton, where harbour works costing £400,000 are in course of construction. When that harbour is completed we shall want to justify its existence, and we hope to be able to recapture some of our vanished trade. This includes wool, aggregating about 35,000 bales per annum, which is sent to Perth to be sold. The lead is sent to the metropolitan area to be smelted or shipped abroad. We want our coalfield at Irwin developed. I heard the replies given this afternoon to the questions asked by Mr. Moore. I do not think there is a man owning any part of the Irwin coalfield who would not come to reasonable terms with the Government for the working of that land. When the boring plant was on the Irwin coalfield, the Government seemed to be terrified lest some better coal might be discovered and, notwithstanding the efforts put forward by the members for the province to prevent the party leaving, they went away about 14 days after coal was discovered. There is another matter with which I have dealt on several occasions, namely the price charged by the Government for land. Take Mullewa as an example: Mallee land there is classed at 8s. to 9s. per acre, and yet 500 miles south, at Esperance, the same price obtains. Surely it is reasonable to believe that in a district 500 miles nearer to the South Pole, the air must contain more moisture and the conditions must be better for cereal growing. At Mullewa the dews disappear after September, but in the southern areas there are dews until Christmas time, all of which assist plant life. Yet there is no difference in the prices charged. The valuers are told to consider the quality of the soil only, and to disregard the locality, its proximity to railways, or the water supply. No difference is made in the price. A lot of the land at Mullewa is unsuitable for agriculture. That district is a little too far north. But the land is useful for grazing. To pay 8s. per acre for land for grazing purposes, however, is impossible. So this land is lying idle, whereas it might well be used for grazing areas.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: What is the rainfall?

Hon. J. MILLS: About 12 inches. Some time ago a select committee, which was afterwards constituted a Royal Commission, was appointed to inquire into the grievances of soldier settlers. The Commission travelled all round the State and, so far as I can learn, there is not a single instance of a soldier having got any redress. As a matter of fact the Commission appeared to me to be merely a buffer between the Government and the soldier settler. I do not wish to be unkind, but I consider that the Commission should

have been composed of men who understood farming conditions. I doubt whether one member of the Commission knows the difference between bearded wheat and skinless barley, with the exception, perhaps, of Colonel Denton, and it was probably their lack of knowledge that entailed want of sympathy. I know of one or two soldiers who were dissatisfied and who presented their cases to the Commission, and yet nothing was done. I did not notice in the report of the Commission any reference to one particular man, but I saw the remarks of Mr. McLarty, the last witness to give evidence, and he expressed the belief that the property in question was a good and valuable one, that it was not over-capitalised and no reduction should be made. I have known this particular block since childhood and, with all due respect to Mr. McLarty, whom I hold in high esteem, I say he is wrong. I hope that next time a Commission is appointed for similar work, it will be composed of men who understand the position. It is a great pity that the soldiers did not in the first place stand as a political party. They could have looked after their own interests much better than anyone else has done it for them. But unfortunately they were switched on to parties of different interests.

Hon. T. Moore: The trouble is they joined the wrong party.

Hon. J. MILLS: Yes, too many of them joined the Labour Party.

Hon. T. Moore: They joined the "win-the-war" party. Now they are getting back.

Hon. J. MILLS: I do not think that we in this State are doing too much for our soldiers. Some months ago I read a Press telegram which stated that the soldiers in Victoria were asking the Government to set aside all interest charges in future, and the reply given by the Minister for Lands, Mr. Oman, was reported as follows:—

The plan under which soldiers had been settled provided very liberal concessions of money for the purpose of acquiring land and making advances to the soldier settlers, of whom there were 10,000 in Victoria. The average cost of that money—about £18,700,000—was 6 per cent. and the State Government lent it to the settlers at 5 per cent.

Here they are charged 6 or 6½ per cent.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But the capitalisation of their properties here is about one-fourth of what it is in Victoria.

Hon. J. MILLS: The report continues—That concession represented £180,000 a year.

That amount, of course, was passed on to the general taxpayer. There is no concession of that kind in Western Australia.

Under the land settlement plan an average period of two years free of interest was allowed. No more generous plan for alleviating their conditions was necessary. Mr. Oman promised that cases of hardship would be dealt with on their merits. He

did not believe that the great majority of soldier settlers stood for the repudiation of their contracts.

The Minister for Education: When was that statement made?

Hon. J. MILLS: That is a telegram which appeared in the "West Australian" bearing the date "Melbourne, 20th February." I am exceedingly sorry that the Premier has switched on to the South-West so soon for the reason that he has not completed his work in the wheat belt. From my knowledge and reading we have in dry areas at least 2,000 settlers, who have no permanent or reliable water supplies, and these men are unable to keep on their holdings stock other than their working horses. There is hardly a farmer amongst them who could not keep 500 sheep—some of them could carry many more but they would easily average 500—if they had reliable water supplies. Two thousand farmers with 500 sheep each would add a million sheep to the State's flocks, but owing to the water difficulty, it is impossible for the sheep to be kept. The water difficulty is a very big one indeed, but it should be tackled by the Government. Had the Premier tackled it before starting on the work in the South-West, it would have been better both for him and for the State. One way of enabling these settlers to overcome their difficulties and meet their liabilities is to provide them with stock, but this is impossible until water supplies are constructed. I hope the Premier will take this matter in hand and see whether water cannot be provided for the settlers. Just out of Yalgoo, which is now in an agricultural electorate, 250,000 to 300,000 gallons of potable water is being pumped to waste daily. This is not far from the wheat belt. If such a stream of water is available at that place there should be other streams which could be turned to good account.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: At what depth is that?

Hon. J. MILLS: I think the mine is 250 feet deep. Important as is the matter of supplying water and sheep, another necessary thing is to see that each farmer does his work properly. The Premier lays down that a man can farm 600 acres per annum, namely, fallow 300 and crop 300. That is all very well in the Northam district, but in the back country a man with a big family has frequently to go to the siding to cart stores and he may have to cart water on one or two days a week during the early years of settlement. Then again, his land is full of stones, resulting in frequent breakages of machinery parts, and there are other disabilities with which he has to contend. These disabilities are unknown in a centre like Northam, where a man can turn on a tap to get water and where carting can be done by contract. If a settler does not crop 300 acres per annum his living allowance is reduced. If such a settler were allowed to crop a smaller area and do it well, I think it would be possible to increase the average yield by three or four bushels per acre and the I.A.B. would then

be in a better position than it is to-day. These views I submit for the consideration of the Premier. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st August, 1923.

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

QUESTION—PREMIERS' CONFERENCE.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Is it his intention to place on the Table of the House a copy of the minutes of the last Premiers' conference?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

QUESTION—PENSIONERS' RATES EXEMPTION.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Works: Is it his intention to introduce this session an amending Bill to the Pensioners' Rates Exemption Act, 1922, prohibiting the charging of 5 per cent. interest on the arrears of rates, etc., under the Act to invalid and old age pensioners as now charged by the Water and Sewerage Department?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: It is not necessary to introduce an amending Act. Interest will not be collected on rates exempted under the Pensioners' Rates Exemption Act, 1922.

QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, PURCHASE.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Premier: 1, Have the negotiations in regard to the purchase of the Midland Railway Company's land and railway been completed? 2, If so, will he make a statement in regard to the matter? 3, If not, when will he be in a position to make such statement?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Valuations have been received and are now being considered.

QUESTION—ROAD-MAKING, FEDERAL GRANT.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the amount expected to be received by this State from the Commonwealth Government for road-making purposes? 2, What are the conditions in connection with the payment of this amount? 3, What method of allocation amongst road boards and municipalities is proposed in regard to the distribution?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The matter is at present the subject of correspondence, and in due course the papers will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLIES, ERADU AND GERALDTON.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Since supplies have been regularly utilised what is the average amount of water taken by the Railway Department weekly from the Wicherina reservoir at Eradu? 2, What is the price per 1,000 gallons? 3, What was the average amount of water distilled by the distilling plant at Geraldton per week during the twelve months preceding 30th June, 1923? 4, What was the average cost per 1,000 gallons over that period?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 16,000 gallons per week for period 26th March to 30th June, 1923. 2, 5s. 3, 140,860 gallons. 4, Operating costs 9s. per 1,000, capital charges 1s. 8½d. per 1,000; total 10s. 8½d. per 1,000.

QUESTION—WATER METERS.

Mr. LUTEY asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the cost per annum of repairing and replacing water meters in the Kalgoorlie area? 2, What amount of rent is received per annum for water meters in the Kalgoorlie area? 3, What is the cost per annum of repairing and replacing water meters in the metropolitan area? 4, What amount of rent is received for water meters in the metropolitan area per annum?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The question involves the preparation of a