

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 30th November, 1906.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—IMMIGRATION LECTURER.

Mr. BATH asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Had his attention been drawn to the complaints made by Mr. J. H. Wilbur *re* the treatment meted out to him while acting as Immigration Lecturer for the State? 2, If so, had the Minister instituted inquiries, and with what result? 3, Had the result of Mr. Wilbur's lectures and work proved eminently satisfactory to the State? 4, Did the Minister intend to take steps to see that Mr. Wilbur's grievances were redressed?

THE MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Mr. Wilbur had some grounds for complaint in regard to delay in sending him printed matter on one occasion, but the matter was explained to him; he also complained in regard to delay in furnishing him with new slides, but this was unavoidable. 3, Mr. Wilbur's work was satisfactory. 4, No; as it is not considered that Mr. Wilbur has any grievance. He was engaged under an agreement which stipulated that three months' notice on either side would terminate same. As his services could not be further utilised, Mr. Wilbur was given three months' notice, and at his urgent request the salary was paid in advance.

PAPERS—MINING ACCIDENT AT CUE.

Mr. HOLMAN: I desire to ask the Minister for Mines, by leave without notice, whether he will lay on the Table of the House all papers in connection with the inquest held on Mr. Hugh A. Hilly, who was killed at Cue on 28th September last. I may say that I wrote to the Minister some six or eight weeks

ago, requesting a copy of the papers, but so far have received no answer.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I make the hon. member a promise of an answer at the next sitting of the House. I have not yet seen the papers, and know nothing about them. The hon. member made this request to me to-day; but not knowing what the papers may contain, I do not know whether I can lay them on the Table. On Tuesday next, however, I shall be prepared to reply, and I shall probably bring the papers with me.

Mr. HOLMAN: I shall be glad if the Minister will state whether he will allow me to see the papers before the Mines Regulation Bill next comes before the House; because some breach of that Act was committed, and therefore I consider it necessary to see the papers before the measure is farther dealt with.

THE MINISTER: I will make the hon. member no promise whatever. As I have said, I have not seen the papers and do not know what they may contain. By Tuesday next I shall have seen them, and shall be prepared to reply. There may be some legal objection; some case may be *sub judice* for all I know. Very probably I shall bring the papers here with me on Tuesday next; that is, unless there is any very strong objection.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Copy of correspondence between the Government and the Agent General relating to statements made by Mr. Kaufmann on the subject of the construction of a railway to Ravensthorpe.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1906-7.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from the previous day, Mr. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental £54,186, recoup £8,099:

Mr. BATH: The subjects comprised in these Estimates having been treated fairly exhaustively during the discussion on the Loan Bill, he would reserve most of the observations he had to offer until the various items were reached. However, he felt bound to remark that

he had never heard a more calamitous statement than that made yesterday by the Premier to the effect that it was sufficient if the revenue of Western Australia would cover cost of administration and maintenance of existing works. No State of the Commonwealth, even in the most despairing days, when in the lowest possible depths of financial distress, fell so low as not to be able to construct some works out of revenue.

THE PREMIER said that he had referred to cost of administration and maintenance and improvement of existing works. Our railways were being improved every day.

MR. BATH: The Premier was talking on that occasion of the general revenue. The hon. gentleman had been understood to say that if the consolidated revenue were sufficient to pay cost of administration and maintenance of existing works—

THE PREMIER: And interest and sinking fund, we should be doing very well.

MR. JOHNSON: The Premier never mentioned it.

THE PREMIER: It was not necessary to do so.

MR. BATH: Even with the amendment the Premier mentioned he (Mr. Bath) would say that the standard of financial administration in Western Australia would be far below that in the Eastern States when in the control of the most incompetent Treasurers. Even after the boom in Melbourne, when Victoria was suffering that terrible depression, they were always able to find a considerable sum out of revenue for the construction of new works, and if the remark made were to be published in the financial journals in the old country it would be very destructive to the credit of Western Australia in home financial circles. It was an extraordinary statement for the Premier to make. He also desired to point out what must have been an error on the part of the Treasurer in the general discussion on the loan proposals; that was in connection with the increase of population. The Treasurer gave an altogether erroneous idea as to the progress of population in 1904 and 1906, and was very careful not to bracket the two years together and make a comparison of 1904-5 with 1905-6, because if he had made a comparison between 1904-5 and between 1905-6 he would have found that the increase of popula-

tion in the latter year showed a considerable falling off as compared with the year 1904-5. As to the optimistic view of the hon. gentleman of what it would be in 1908, he (Mr. Bath) had only to point out that for the month of October in this year we had a decrease in population amounting to 487.

THE PREMIER: We always had just before the Melbourne Cup.

MR. BATH: If the hon. gentleman would look at previous records he would find that was not correct.

THE PREMIER: The last three months of the year as a rule.

MR. BATH: It had been true as to the end of 1905 and the end of 1906, but not prior to that, and the Premier had to bear in mind that we had an excess of births for October alone of 395, or practically 400, and for the four months of the year the increase of births over deaths was 1,800, yet the total increase in population since the 30th June had only been 1,700, so there would have to be an enormous increase of population if the estimate of the Treasurer was to be realised. There was another fact to be borne in mind. As long as we maintained the ratio per head of the population regarding our public debts, and did not increase it to any abnormal degree, it mattered not how much the aggregate debt was increased, but we must remember that the state of things now as compared with the state of affairs five, six, or seven years ago was altogether different. Then our population was largely an adult population, which represented a big earning capacity, a big tax-paying capacity, and the debt per head of the population then was not so significant as the same amount would be to-day, when we had a much larger proportion of women and children in our total population. There was one thing he would like to say. It seemed rather an absurdity that we should be discussing these Loan Estimates and practically voting sums of money for the construction of works prior to our having the railway Bills before us. We should have had these Bills, and should have known whether the House would commit itself to those proposals or not, or which of them the House would commit itself to, and then the Loan Estimates should have been drawn up with that information on

hand. After passing these votes we might later on decide not to carry certain of these railway proposals. He thought that placed the Committee in a false position. He protested against bringing the Estimates down at this early date. At least the second readings of the Bills should have been taken in conjunction with the discussion of the Estimates, and our action in regard to those Bills should have been a guidance as to the votes to be placed on the Loan Estimates.

MR. HOLMAN regretted the action of the Government in forcing matters so rapidly without giving an opportunity of studying them fully. Yesterday when we were discussing the schedule of the Loan Bill we were informed that the whole of the important matters referred to would be considered when we were dealing with the Loan Estimates. He had not had an opportunity, and he did not think any member had, of looking through the Estimates to see exactly what proposals were before the Committee in those Estimates. We should have had time to see whether these proposals on the Loan Estimates should be passed. We were asked to pass sums amounting to £1,332,100 without any information at all. There were some 20 railways to be considered, and not a word of information was placed before members to give us any idea whether those proposals were warranted or not. There were various other matters which should be placed before members. He was not disposed to pass the Estimates dealing with several matters in connection with items. He was not satisfied even after the correspondence that had been sent down that Mr. Kaufman had been dealt with in the manner he should have been.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Committee were not dealing with Mr. Kaufman.

MR. HOLMAN was dealing with one of the railways referred to on the Estimates, and was asking for information. If not able to ask a question now, when should he do so?

THE CHAIRMAN: When the Railway Bill was before the House.

MR. HOLMAN: We should be committing the country to an expenditure of £10,000 for the construction of a railway if we passed these Estimates, and this

was the time to place the matter before the Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not till that item was reached.

MR. HOLMAN was speaking generally on the items. The transaction was not so clean as it ought to be.

THE PREMIER: What was not clean about it?

MR. HOLMAN: Mr. Kaufman knew that the line would be constructed before that information was given to members.

THE PREMIER: That was a deliberate misstatement, and must be withdrawn.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw.

MR. HOLMAN would not withdraw. He had not said the Premier gave the information.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member made a distinct charge against the Government, and must withdraw it.

MR. HOLMAN withdrew the statement. Long before members of the House knew the line would be constructed Mr. Kaufman received that information, though he was not entitled to it.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question of Mr. Kaufman was not before the Committee.

MR. HOLMAN regretted more time was not given for investigating these matters, when a sum of over a million pounds was at stake.

THE PREMIER: The money for the railways would not be available till the Railway Bills passed.

MR. HOLMAN: Much of it could be used for surveys etcetera, and the fact that thousands had been spent would form an argument for passing the Bills. Insufficient attention was given by the Government to the vote for the development of mining and mineral resources. Last year some £20,000 was voted and not spent, though many fields were starving and destitute of water. At places on the Murchison water had to be carted 10 or 12 miles. There was no information as to whether the money on these Estimates would be spent.

THE PREMIER: Full information would be given on the items.

MR. HOLMAN: The whole of the items would have been passed had he not risen.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. The vote put was "Departmental."

MR. JOHNSON : Better defer remarks till the items were reached.

MR. BATH : As to the vote " Railways," could the Committee discuss the Estimates and pass this vote before the Railway Bills authorising the construction of the lines were passed? In previous years the Railway Bills were discussed prior to the introduction of Loan Estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN : Loan Estimates like general Estimates, were only estimates, and an Appropriation Bill must be passed to make the moneys available.

Item—Incidental, £7,000 :

MR. A. J. WILSON : The proportion of this item to the estimated salaries seemed large.

THE PREMIER : The item covered postage, stationery, advertising, travelling, surveying instruments, and repairs in connection with the loan works in these Estimates. It was similar to Item 55 in the Works Estimates.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Railways*, £523,738; recoup, £9,279 :

Item—Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways, £90,390; recoup, *nil* :

MR. BATH : This item had called for considerable discussion in past years. The title was too general. Frequent complaints were made by the Auditor General as to the inclusion in this item of works that in no sense increased the capital value of the railways to a greater extent than the original authorisations made available for the cost of construction. We should have more definite information in regard to the item, which was used for works, a considerable portion of which should be paid for out of revenue.

THE PREMIER agreed that every care should be taken in connection with the expenditure of this money. The item had been considerably reduced. It was anticipated that to the end of this financial year the money would be spent on the completion of works in hand, such as the Beaufort-Barrack Street bridge, which would be well advanced, an additional platform to deal with show traffic at Claremont, a passenger station at Fenian Crossing, additional water

columns, station yards at Bunbury, fencing in settled agricultural districts, and additions to telephones, signalling, etc. The Commissioner anticipated receiving over £200,000, but the Government did not feel justified in asking the Committee to vote such a large sum under this item.

MR. HOLMAN : Except during the last few years, it was customary to place a sum of about £25,000 on the Revenue Estimates for new works and improvements. Was that sum now included in these Loan Estimates, and was it the intention of the Government to always keep it on the Loan Estimates?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : The Revenue Estimates included a large sum for improvements to opened lines. This item was absolutely necessary on account of the large works which were in hand, and which should never be a charge on the Revenue Estimates. The Commissioner suggested a list of works to be carried out, and in every instance where the recommendation was for expenditure from Loan Funds it would be agreed that the items should be charged to capital account. That the Commissioner asked for such a large sum was due to him (the Minister), because he had requested the Commissioner to give particulars of every work the Commissioner thought should be carried out in order that members might have some knowledge of the propositions of the Railway Department, and it was well the statement was put in the report; it let members know that the Commissioner thought the works could be properly undertaken. However, the Government could not find enough money for those works, and thought the expenditure could be much better employed in building new railways for the farther development of the country and bringing in increased revenue. Most of the works proposed by the Commissioner under this item would not bring in increased revenue. For instance, the Commissioner asked for £20,000 for additional office accommodation for the railway officers. While it would be desirable to give additional accommodation for the railway officers, it was a work that could be very well left over until there was greater prosperity in the State. On the other hand, the duplication to Spencer's Brook was a fair charge against

capital account, as was also the expenditure on the Fremantle station. The original authority for the Fremantle station was £80,000. The amount spent to the end of the last financial year was only £39,000, and probably £20,000 had been spent during the current financial year. It was necessary to provide in these Estimates this year for about £40,000, the expenditure for the year on this work. On the score of economy the Government had kept the account down considerably, very much more than in previous years. Not having looked up the figures, however, he could not make that statement absolutely, but if members looked at the big increase in capital account during the past years, they would see how it had grown. It was proposed that the expenditure should be much less this year. With the exception of the duplication to Spencer's Brook, there was very little capital expenditure of a large nature to which objection could be taken.

MR. STONE drew attention to the condition of the Northampton Railway. That line had been laid 30 years ago, with 35lb. rails. Now it was not in a safe condition, and would not stand heavy stock running over it. He understood that 45lb. rails were to be taken up on other railways to be replaced with 60lb. rails, and that the rails taken up were to be sent to the Northampton line; but the Government should at the earliest opportunity have the Northampton line regraded. He noticed the Commissioner of Railways had asked for £20,000 to do this work.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES was pleased that the progress of the Northampton district within recent years warranted increased expenditure. As we had to provide for the relaying of the line between Narrogin and Beverley the other work would follow as a natural consequence. Although there might be some difficulty in connection with the traffic on the Northampton line the people must not forget that they had the advantage of a railway. We recognised the necessity for improving the line, but it would be wiser to let the matter remain in abeyance for some time to enable railway facilities to be given to new districts. As soon as we could make the finances fit the bill the work would be carried out. There was no necessity for

putting very heavy rails in this line. The work would receive consideration, although it could not be done at the present time.

MR. T. L. BROWN (Geraldton) was glad the Government had this work in view. At present there were four trains weekly on this line, but a daily service would be a great convenience. Regrading was a matter which he hoped the department would not lose sight of, and the regrading should be carried out at the same time as the relaying. Some straightening also was required which would shorten the distance. The daily service would facilitate matters in view of the coming harvest.

THE MINISTER: The question of service depended on the traffic. If traffic was there the department would give the service to the people, but if the traffic was not there we must practise every economy. Members would agree that where traffic did not warrant a service we should not run trains unnecessarily.

MR. JOHNSON: This was one of the items about which members had complained year after year that they did not get sufficient details of the different works proposed to be carried out with the money. It was a vote almost identical with the vote for the development of mining and the development of agriculture. We passed a lump sum and left it to the discretion of the Minister as to what work should be carried out with the money. In the Works Department if £20 had to be spent on a bridge, Parliament had to pass that amount, but in connection with the railways the department could spend £50,000 or £60,000 on a work and Parliament had no say. Of course Parliament had to vote the sum, but the details of the works to be carried out were not given. It was inadvisable that such a state of affairs should continue. The Minister could not guarantee that work would not be carried on from this vote that should be carried out from revenue. The principle was absolutely wrong for the manager of a large revenue, earning department to have control of loan funds. At the end of the financial year there was a readjustment of funds and according to the state of the finances it was decided whether certain works should be carried out from loan moneys or out of revenue. This state of affairs

applied to all Governments, still it was absolutely wrong. Suppose the railways were run for one year at a huge profit, the manager of the railways immediately turned round and said that if he showed a profit there would be an agitation for a reduction of freights and fares, therefore it was inadvisable to show a profit; and in order to adjust that state of affairs the department charged up works that should be carried out from loan to revenue. If the picture was the other way, the work was charged to loan to increase the profits. It was time the Government put down this sort of thing. The Government he had the honour to be connected with did intend to take this matter in hand, although not to take the whole of the loan expenditure from the Commissioner of Railways, but to give the Minister for Works or the Engineer-in-Chief the right to criticise a work and to say whether it should be done out of loan or revenue. We had had in this country station buildings which were not insured, burned down and re-erected out of loan money. He referred to the goods shed at Southern Cross. The building was constructed by the Works Department out of the vote in connection with the construction of the Southern Cross-Coolgardie railway, and the building being burned down was reconstructed out of loan funds. That was absolutely wrong. Take the illustration of the Bunbury station; was it for the manager of a revenue earning concern to say what portion of the Bunbury station should be charged to revenue and what portion to loan? The Commissioner submitted the matter to the Minister, who was a man of remarkable ability, especially at slinging off through the telephone; but with all respect it might be said that the Minister could not discriminate whether a work should be charged to loan or to revenue, or partly, and to what extent, to each of them. Therefore the departmental proposals should be criticised by someone possessing the necessary technical knowledge, but outside the department. The Auditor General complained about the state of affairs year after year.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The report this year was very favourable.

MR. BATH: We had not yet received the Auditor General's report.

MR. JOHNSON: The last report did give evidence of an improvement, but that improvement was due to the efforts of the Auditor General, whose life at times was not safe. That gentleman ought not to be compelled to take extreme action for the protection of the State. What concerned us most was to get a little more control over the expenditure. The Commissioner had stated that certain expenditure was to take place in connection with the Beaufort Street bridge and the Melbourne Road bridge, for which two works the enormous sum of £66,000 was set down. The Melbourne Road bridge had been cut out, but what would the Beaufort Street bridge cost?

THE MINISTER said he would explain later.

MR. JOHNSON: Very well. The construction of a railway station at Fenian Crossing had been commenced by the Commissioner before we were supplied with any details, and so the vote was anticipated. There was considerable dissatisfaction among a section of the residents about Fenian crossing, who contended that too much consideration had been given to one side.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The work had only just been started, and nothing material had yet been done.

MR. JOHNSON: The hon. gentleman was wrong; a considerable amount of work had been done, and the substructure was practically completed. These votes should not be anticipated, especially when there was a possibility of Parliament's disagreeing with the Minister's or the Commissioner's decision.

MR. BATH: The Minister was now asking for farther details on this item, but the Auditor General had been asking for similar information for years past. The Commissioner of Railways seemed to desire to do what he pleased with the money of the State. The vital point, however, was that these works did not increase the revenue-earning capacity of the railways.

THE MINISTER: These votes increase the capital value of the railways, although possibly not their earning capacity.

MR. BATH: The capital value was not increased to the extent of the vote.

THE MINISTER: If a new railway station were built here in Perth, the capital value of the railway system would be increased.

MR. BATH: If it were a new station altogether, yes; but if it were only a reconstruction of the old one, then the capital value was increased to the extent of the difference between the value of the old building and the value of the new one, and no more. Some scientific basis should be arrived at, under which a percentage of profits might be set aside for the purpose of additions and improvements, so that in good years provision might be made for the inevitable bad years. A striking feature of the Railway report was the great decline in profits relatively to cost of construction, and we could not even be sure that the percentage stated showed the true position of affairs; because, according to the Auditor General, works that ought to have been constructed out of revenue, and which should therefore have diminished profits, had been charged to capital account, a false idea of the position thus being given. He urged that the Colonial Secretary should have the Auditor General's report laid on the table before these Estimates were dealt with.

THE MINISTER: That was an impossibility. The railway report was made up to the 30th June, and it was not printed for three months afterwards; therefore it was not feasible that the Auditor General should prepare his report within the time which the hon. member sought to fix.

MR. BATH: The Audit Act did not contemplate such long delays in the furnishing of reports by the Auditor General.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member knew very well that if there were anything of a serious nature to report, the Auditor General would report immediately to Parliament.

MR. BATH: As matters were now, the Auditor General's Department was not as useful as it should be. If the report were not available until after the money had been voted, when it was too late to retrieve our position, then the Auditor General's Department afforded Parliament no protection whatever. In regard to this vote the decrease in the profits on our railways was largely due

to the fact that we were increasing the Loan expenditure and thereby increasing the interest and sinking fund without any appreciable increase in the earnings of the railway.

MR. HOLMAN: What contracts would be undertaken and what works were not completed?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES hoped the hon. member did not wish him to go through the full details. [**MR. HOLMAN:** No.] The principal works authorised and in hand were the new station at Fremantle and the duplication up towards Wooroloo. There was an authority of £1,312 for the loco. shops at Midland Junction. That was not put in hand yet, and he did not suppose the money would be spent until next year. The other amounts were merely small works. The member for Guildford must take his share of the responsibility for the station at Fremantle, the expenditure for which was the biggest we had to provide for. The amount on the Estimates this year for works generally which would be under the control of the Minister to give authority was £8,000. It would be for small jobs which we could not foresee. It was idle to say the Ministry should not have power and some discrimination in the expenditure of this Loan money. It would be very unwise if we were bound down too closely in regard to how these moneys should be spent.

MR. BATH: The Commissioner?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member (Mr. Johnson) himself gave the Commissioner power to engage in certain works of a similar nature, recognising how essential it was, and that the Minister himself could not be conversant with all these small details.

MR. JOHNSON: Up to £200.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES approved of it. In regard to larger matters the Commissioner was responsible to the Government and the Government to Parliament. Duplication would want £7,600 more than the present authorities. The present authorities given before his time in regard to that duplication were £22,658 and since then there was an authority for £19,618. Then there was fencing which would be a general item throughout the railways of the State, £5,000. Telegraphs and telephones,

£2,000. Additional water columns would take a thousand pounds, and the vote on the Beaufort Street bridge would be £16,000. That amount would not suffice he was afraid. It would come to about £18,000 or £18,500. The department asked for a much larger sum for the purpose of making considerable improvements. However, cost had to be kept down to within reasonable limits of the original amount, £16,000. With a view to giving greater facilities he would not mind recommending work which would cost, perhaps, £18,000, but he did not think there should be a larger sum than that anyhow. (Interjection by Mr. Johnson.) In regard to the Melbourne Road bridge there were three plans, and that was a very awkward place to put a bridge across. Land would have to be resumed on one side of the road or the other. The work would cost from £40,000 to £50,000. We could not find the money and they would have to do without the convenience of a bridge there for some time. He was sorry, because he knew the difficulties which lay in the way of the general public in connection with the crossing, but when it came to a question of spending £50,000 they would have to wait for some time, or some better arrangement would have to be suggested, to get over the difficulties. We had got over the difficulties to some extent by giving increased platforms for ballasting. There were sidings on the other side, and we relieved a good deal of the congestion of the traffic in connection with the cartage of the ballasting and such matters as that on the other side of the line? However, no provision was made this year for a bridge crossing Melbourne Road. The improvements to the Claremont station were a matter in relation to which the Government took authority for the construction without Parliament having been asked. Things of this sort would continually crop up. He was asked to give accommodation upon the Agricultural Society's grounds but could not see his way to do that. It meant having two stations within a couple of hundred yards of each other; and he thought, moreover, there was some chance of getting better control of the traffic if people had to walk a couple of hundred yards from the station to the gates. There had been great danger in handling the

traffic, so the Government gave the authority for the expenditure, and he thought members would approve of the action taken. In connection with Fenian Crossing there was £1,000. It might cost a little more; if so it would have to be paid out of revenue. We were providing £5,000 for general work. There might be some instances where a difficulty arose in determining what proportion should be charged to revenue and what to capital when we were making improvements in an existing yard. He did not know anything about the goods shed burnt down at Southern Cross, referred to by the member for Guildford, but he knew of one place which was burnt down, namely, Bunbury station. Another building was then erected at a cost of £3,500, of which £2,000 was charged to revenue and £1,500 to loan. The Minister could not be conversant with all works suggested. The Commissioner would ask for authority to spend £200 or £300 for some place the Minister had not heard of before, and he willingly trusted the Commissioner in regard to his recommendations when he wanted improvements in those places. If the Commissioner suggested that a cattle yard should be put up at some place, it was not for the Minister to investigate. When important works were suggested which would cost the country a considerable sum of money it was the duty of the Minister to make himself thoroughly conversant with every phase of the question and to take the responsibility for the whole of that expenditure. If the Commissioner recommended him to spend large sums of money and the Minister willingly gave way to a recommendation which he could not justify before the House, the responsibility lay upon himself, and he hoped that in future when we were dealing with any question of this sort in regard to any expenditure, especially works of any moment, the responsibility would always be upon the Minister and not in any way upon the Commissioner. We might blame the Commissioner perhaps for having made the recommendation, but the Minister himself should take the responsibility, whether he acted rightly or wrongly in the matter. Even as regarded the Public Works Department a huge sum was placed in the hands of the

Minister. In relation to roads board votes large sums had always been placed under the control of the Minister. When the member for Guildford was in charge of the Public Works Department Parliament very willingly voted a large sum, which was distributed upon the basis approved of by the Minister himself. The same thing applied in connection with the Mines Department. We must allow the expenditure of these moneys to be left to the Government of the day, because we never could tell when some special and urgent requirement might arise. Of course we could go too far in regard to these matters, but speaking generally it was well to put the responsibility on the Minister; and if Parliament found that he was extravagant or wasted the money placed in his hands he ought to be impeached very quickly.

Item—Bridgetown towards Wilgarup, £1,000:

MR. BATH: On a point of order, supposing we passed this sum for a railway from Bridgetown towards Wilgarup and when the Railway Bill was brought before us the proposal was rejected, in what position should we be, having passed this money on the Estimates? It seemed an absurd position, and one to which the House should not be committed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The money could not be expended and would not be expended.

THE PREMIER took it that to carry out what the Leader of the Opposition desired would mean that we should have to bring down a Bill for every one of the railways included in the loan schedule.

MR. BATH: Yes; that had always been done.

THE PREMIER understood that a different practice had been followed. It would be noticed that the provision made here was all for preliminary work, such as surveys, drawing plans, and specifications. He was certainly under the impression that before any of these railways could be undertaken and tenders actually called separate authorisation must be given by the House by a Bill brought down seeking authority for that specific work.

MR. BATH: The practice now adopted was never adopted previously. Formerly Railway Bills were always passed long

before Estimates for the expenditure of stated sums were submitted. Certainly Loan Estimates had provided for surveys generally; but this seemed an attempt, by allocating the vote for surveys to specified lines, to authorise the expenditure without passing railway Bills.

MR. JOHNSON: This was undoubtedly a new departure, and we were pledging ourselves to these railways. This item pledged us to the Wilgarup railway. Parliament might not approve of the route; and if we passed the item, the public would then be misled. Settlers might assume financial obligations in expectation of the railway.

THE PREMIER: Would not the passing of the Loan Bill be equally misleading?

MR. JOHNSON: No. All knew that the Bill authorised nothing but raising a loan. It was bad enough to ask members to pass the Railway Bills without passing this long list of railways. The whole vote should be combined under "Railways Generally," leaving for future consideration the decision as to specific lines.

THE PREMIER would submit to the Chairman's ruling. The Government had made no attempt to induce members to pledge themselves to the railways mentioned. The amounts, in the Estimates were supplied by the Works Department; and if the Committee wished to reduce the amounts, the Government would consider amendments. The only substantial items in this vote were those for which Bills were to be brought down—the Coolgardie-Norseman, the Greenhills-Quairiding, and the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe railways. The other items were for sums from £1,000 to £3,000, to complete surveys and prepare plans and specifications. As a rule a survey cost £25 to £30 per mile, and the engineers considered it advisable to make provision for these preliminaries.

MR. BATH: The amount of this item was small; but on page 9 we found it was for incidental and preliminary expenses. To bring down Loan Estimates without Railway Bills was contrary to practice, and placed the Committee in a false position. This vote, with the Appropriation Bill, would practically authorise the expenditure; and subsequently, if the Railway Bills were defeated, we should

have voted money for works of which the House disapproved.

THE PREMIER : The same if we passed a vote for surveys generally.

MR. BATH : That would not commit us to any proposals; but passing an amount for a specified railway practically committed the House to its construction. A general vote would not indicate to the public that the House approved of constructing specific railways.

THE PREMIER : Would not the passing of the Loan Bill without amendment encourage the public belief more than passing this small item of £1,000?

MR. BATH : Not if the Treasurer spoke truly last night, when he said that without the Estimates the Loan Bill did not commit the country to the railways. On that assurance the Loan Bill was allowed to pass.

MR. HOLMAN : The Premier's explanation was hardly satisfactory—that the only large amounts on the Estimates were for railways to be commenced this year. Some six railways were projected for this year, not including the Narrogin-Wickepin line, for which £4,000 was nevertheless provided in this vote, though for the Black Range-Mount Magnet line only £2,000 was provided. Passing these Estimates practically pledged the House to construct the railways. Progress should be reported till after the second reading speeches on the railway Bills. This vote authorised the Government to spend the money on surveys and other preliminaries. A vote for surveys generally would not induce people to settle along specific routes. These items mentioned the terminal points, and if passed the people would be justified in regarding the railways as certainties.

MR. JOHNSON : The member for Greenough (Mr. Stone) should note that every railway mentioned in the Loan Bill was mentioned in the Loan Estimates except the Upper Chapman line. A large sum was proposed to be expended on lines for which Bills were not to be introduced this session. If we passed estimates for railways, and the Bills for those railways were not introduced this session, we encouraged people to go into the districts that would be served by the proposed railways to spend money there which might not be justified. The Government should strike

out any mention of the particular railways and lump the sums under one heading of "Surveys, New Lines." We would arrive at the same result without pledging ourselves to any particular district for which a railway was suggested.

THE TREASURER : The hon. member was suggesting an unusual course. In the Loan Estimates of previous years nothing of the kind suggested by the hon. member was done. The item, "Surveys, New Lines" was for the cost of surveying. We would not charge to that item the incidental preliminary expenses of any railway construction. Members should realise that all these railways proposed were part of the Government policy. For those it was intended to construct immediately, measures would be introduced this session to get the necessary authority. For the others it was necessary to get authority to spend the small amounts put opposite the different items to cover preliminary expenses.

MR. JOHNSON : But in doing so we pledged ourselves absolutely to the lines.

THE TREASURER : No. Take the Upper Chapman Railway.

MR. JOHNSON : That was shelved.

THE TREASURER : Not at all. When a line was surveyed, the surveyors' field books come into the department, the whole thing was plotted, plans and specifications were made, and then a correct estimate might be arrived at upon which the department would be in a position to call tenders immediately. Parliament authorised the construction of the line. Surely the hon. member did not wish to stop that being done, and to hang everything up. It was necessary to have these items passed for all these lines so that the preliminary work could be carried out, and so that everything would be ready, as soon as Parliament gave the authorisation to construct the lines, to proceed with the work. With regard to the Upper Chapman Railway, the member for Guildford was evidently trying to "pull the leg" of the member for Greenough, and trying to arouse in that hon. member a feeling of resentment towards the Government. The hon. member, apparently, failed to do so. On page 12 of the Loan Estimates it would be found that there was an unexpended balance of loan appropriations at the end

of the last financial year for the Upper Chapman railway of £16,101. The necessary sum for the preliminary work on that railway had been sanctioned, but no portion of it could be spent during the current financial year, because, as was explained by the Premier the other evening, there were different routes and different starting points suggested for that railway, and it was impossible to come to any conclusion until the matter was settled.

MR. T. L. BROWN : Did not that apply equally to other lines?

THE TREASURER : In the case of other lines, the starting points were decided on. In regard to the amounts for the railways in these Estimates, the money was necessary and must be charged up to the different railways as they appeared on the Estimates. The construction of the lines, however, could not be proceeded with until Bills were passed by Parliament.

MR. BATH : It was the Treasurer who was taking a new course on these Estimates. In previous years, since he (Mr. Bath) had been in Parliament, Railway Bills had always been introduced before the Loan Estimates were submitted to Parliament, with the result that when once the authority of Parliament was given for the construction of a railway, there was no difficulty in regard to the Loan Estimates, because if a work was authorised by Parliament's carrying the necessary Bill, we were justified in authorising the money to carry on the construction. That was the logical method of doing business, which had always been adopted since he (Mr. Bath) had been in Parliament; but now we were asked to carry these Estimates and authorise the expenditure of the money before the Bills were submitted. The Bills authorising the construction of the Collie-Narrogin Railway and the Geraldton-Murchison Railway were carried long before the Loan Estimates were submitted to Parliament. The course now adopted by the Government seemed to be an insidious method, by the mention of the lines in placing the sum on the Estimates, to commit the House to the approval of railways before the Bills were before us and before any information was supplied as to the different proposals. That course was opposed to

all precedent in the House, and the Treasurer should not insist on its adoption. These sums we were asked to vote were not for surveys only. It was shown on page 9, that the £1,000 to be spent on the Bridgetown towards Wilgarup line was for incidental and preliminary expenses; and that the £5,000 for the Busselton-Lower Blackwood project was to be spent in preliminary expenses and the commencement of construction works. It was not fair to ask us to pass this sum of money when we did not have the Railway Bills before us, or when Parliament had not approved of the railways. Parliament might not be prepared to approve of them until there was reasonable information in connection with them.

MR. HOLMAN : Passing these estimates would commit us to construct the lines. In fact the statement of anticipated progress in the works accompanying the Estimates showed that in nearly every item fair progress was to be made, which showed that the passing of these items would authorise the Government to proceed with the construction of these railways, to which course he was entirely opposed, unless Parliament first had the opportunity of dealing with the different Bills for the railways under this heading. It was a new departure that was proposed. In past years, when it was anticipated that new railways might be built, provision was made for the necessary expenditure under the items of "Agricultural and Other Railways," or "Surveys, New Lines," as was done last year. The amounts opposite the different railways proposed to be built should be struck out and lumped together, probably under the item of "Surveys, New Lines," and then if there was no necessity to go on with the construction of the railways the Government need not expend the money.

MR. BUTCHER : If we passed these Estimates the Government could only proceed with expenditure so far as these items authorised.

MR. HOLMAN : In some cases we were asked to authorise £60,000, and £30,000, and £10,000. We should have the opportunity of dealing with the railways first, and then we could pass these Estimates afterwards.

MR. T. L. BROWN : It did not appear clear from the explanations given by the

Treasurer and the Premier, that because there were rival routes the Upper Chapman Railway should be shelved. No railway had yet been advocated, but there were rival routes suggested. Those interested in the country served by the line endeavoured to get the greatest advantage from the railway it was possible to get, and consequently rival routes came in; but that did not finish the matter; departmental officers were in a position to see which was the most beneficial route, and acquainted the Minister or the department accordingly. Why should not the survey be taken in hand, or why should the matter be shelved? Last year there was a sum of money voted for the Chapman Railway, but we found that this railway was now dropped. There was appearing a sum of £201 which had already been expended.

THE TREASURER: The member was confusing the Loan Estimates with the summary of loan authorisation and unexpended balances and reappropriations. The item £201 was to be reappropriated from another item, the Geraldton-Murchison railway. From the total authorisation of the Geraldton-Murchison railway there was a balance of £201 not expended which was not required, and it was proposed to expend this on the Upper Chapman railway.

MR. JOHNSON: Was the item shelved or omitted?

THE TREASURER: No. He resented the word "shelved." The member had made the most of that term. He had better not mention it again or the people might connect him with the telegram. There was no question of shelving. The term had never been used in connection with the Estimates. The explanation he gave before was that the Government could not expend any money on this line for the next six months, therefore it did not appear on the details of proposed expenditure for this year; but as it was proposed to expend money in connection with a line in that district the next year, if Parliament gave the necessary authority and passed a Bill, the Government had provided in the Loan Bill for the necessary amount.

MR. T. L. BROWN: The Treasurer might give an assurance that at the end of the present financial year, providing the House passed the authorisation, the

Government would be prepared to provide for this railway.

THE PREMIER: In regard to the proposal to give railway facilities to the Upper Chapman, there had been a great deal of controversy as to the route, and as we were not able to name the starting point of the railway it was considered advisable not to definitely mention it. Four different routes had been proposed in connection with this line.

MR. T. L. BROWN: By whom?

THE PREMIER: By a departmental officer, Mr. Inspector Thomson of the Lands Department, who had a very good knowledge of the country to be served. He said in his report:—

I have shown on accompanying sketch or litho. four different routes that might be taken from Geraldton to Narralying, a point at the head of the Chapman river. These routes, each one of which would serve a number of settlers, would open out new country. At the terminus of the proposed line and to the north and north-west of it No. 1 route starts, from Oakagee on the Geraldton-Northampton line, about 14 miles from Geraldton, and goes in a north-easterly direction for about 19 miles. This route would serve the settlers around Nabawee (Jupps), Nanatana where there is a school, and farmers with small holdings, and also the farmers on the Mt. Erin Estate, as it would go through the north-west corner of it, and would be about 11 miles to its farthest point. The lengthy and No. 1 route would be about 19 miles. No. 2 route would start from White Peak on the Geraldton-Northampton railway at a distance of nine miles from Geraldton, and would reach the Chapman Valley in about six miles, and would then traverse that river to Narralying. No. 3 route if practicable, and there are low gaps in the flat-topped ranges between the Northampton line and the Chapman Valley, would in my opinion be the best, and would do the greatest good to the greatest number.

MR. T. L. BROWN: What is the starting point of No. 3? No starting point was given.

THE PREMIER: No. 3 started apparently just beyond the Chapman station, about three miles from Geraldton. No. 4 route also left the main line to Geraldton instead of Northampton, and went in an easterly direction and went up North. It was the longest route. Until an absolute survey had been made of that country it was difficult to define the route to be taken. As to what the Leader of the Opposition had said, last year the Loan Estimates were passed two days before the three Railway

Bills were introduced and passed in the House. We were not adopting any new course.

MR. HOLMAN: If the Government followed the same method as that adopted last year he would be in accord with it, for last year the three Railway Bills were passed two or three days after the Loan Estimates, but the item on the Loan Estimates last year was, "Agricultural and other Railways." The railways were not mentioned. After what the Treasurer had said, if we passed this item we pledged ourselves to the construction of the railways. The Treasurer said the terminals had not been decided on, and therefore we could not alter them.

THE TREASURER: In all the other railways we had a starting point recommended, but in the railway referred to, the Upper Chapman line, we had several proposed starting points, and until the starting point was settled we could not put an item down for preliminary expenses.

MR. HOLMAN: The arguments of the Treasurer and the Premier were entirely different. The Treasurer stated that we would not commit ourselves to the expenditure until the Railway Bills were passed, but money could be expended up to that stated on the Estimates. It would be unfair to the people in the district if the Railway Bills were knocked out after the expenditure had been passed. The Wagin-Dumbleyung, the Katanning-Kojonup, and the Goomalling-Dowerin lines were not mentioned in the Loan Estimates last year.

THE TREASURER: Last year we passed £5,000 for agricultural and other railways. Now what the member proposed was that we should group all the items and pass the total amount. Put a lump sum down for agricultural and other railways.

MR. BATH: Those for which it was not proposed to introduce Bills.

THE TREASURER: Under last year's vote the Government could spend £5,000 on any railway they liked, and the hon. member wished to do the same thing this year, to vote a lump sum which could be spent on any line that had not been mentioned in the House.

MR. JOHNSON: That was the preferable course.

THE TREASURER: It might be preferable to some Governments, but we desired to let members know what it was intended to do with the money, and had given all the information. Up to the amount set down on the Estimates we were authorised to spend in preliminary expenses, but only on the different lines mentioned. If the amounts were grouped together we could spend the money on these lines or any other lines we liked. If the Committee authorised the Government to expend £50,000 on agricultural and other railways, undoubtedly we could spend that sum on any railways we liked. It was better to have the items passed because members would then know how far we were going.

MR. BATH: When last night he questioned these items in the Loan Bill, the Treasurer stated that it did not matter about the Loan Bill, and that the Estimates alone committed the House. It was intended to ask the Speaker's ruling on the point, but he refrained on receiving that assurance from the Minister, who farther stated that if a sum were passed on the Estimates for a particular railway the work of construction could not be undertaken until a special Bill authorising the construction of that railway had been passed.

THE TREASURER: That was so.

MR. BATH: Now we were informed that if this vote were passed we committed ourselves to the expenditure on this particular railway, without any information being given to the House as to whether the line was to be carried through, or whether it was warranted.

MR. BUTCHER: A certain amount of money must be spent in order to get that information.

MR. BATH had no objection whatever to a general vote for the purpose of obtaining information regarding this and other proposed railways. That would not commit Parliament in the same way as this vote would. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) must have heard the Treasurer say that this vote committed us to the railway.

THE TREASURER: No. What he had said was that the vote authorised the Government to spend the money on that railway.

MR. BUTCHER: The vote would procure the information on which Parlia-

ment would decide whether or not to go on with the railway.

MR. BATH: The vote went farther than that. Pages 7 and 8 dealt with preliminary expenses, and Item 10 was for "Preliminary Expenses and Commencement of Construction Works."

MR. BUTCHER: In some instances.

MR. BATH: In all instances other than the railways mentioned by the Minister—the first six. This was contrary to the practice which had hitherto obtained here. On looking through the *Votes and Proceedings* for several sessions he had found that invariably Bills were introduced and authorised before the Committee was asked to vote the necessary funds on the Loan Estimates.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Last year the Bills were not first introduced.

MR. BATH: In past years sums were voted for these services without the particular works being specified, and that course in no way committed the House; but when it was a question of voting money for the initiation of work on a particular railway, the Bill was always passed before the work was undertaken. Now the Committee was asked to vote a sum for the work before the Bill was passed or even introduced, and before an atom of information was supplied. This was distinctly wrong, and contrary to the practice hitherto adopted.

MR. HOLMAN: By passing the items as set forth the Committee would be authorising the Government to expend moneys on railways which could not be dealt with until next session at the earliest.

THE TREASURER: Plans and specifications had to be prepared.

MR. HOLMAN: True, but why could not that be done in the same way as in past years? Why should the terminal points be specified in each instance? Last year the present Government placed on the Loan Estimates an item, "Agricultural and other railways, £5,000," and the Committee had granted the necessary authorisation to expend that sum on such matters. When a return was presented showing the progress made to 30th June on works under construction, there was against this item (No. 8—Agricultural and other Railways, £5,000), "Commencement of Construction, Goomalling-Dowerin, Katanning-Kojonup, and

Wagin-Dumbleyung Railways." That was apart altogether from the Estimates. If the items were passed in their present form, the people would be misled into believing that these particular railways were thereby authorised.

MR. BOLTON: Would not the passing of the items create false values in the districts concerned?

MR. HOLMAN: Of course.

MR. BATH: The Bills were discussed last year before the Estimates.

MR. HOLMAN: No.

THE TREASURER: The Bills were only passed on the Saturday morning, the day of the prorogation.

MR. BATH: But they were discussed on the second reading before the Estimates.

MR. JOHNSON: And when a Bill passed its second reading, it was practically passed.

MR. HOLMAN: If the items passed, the lines would be practically authorised and would have to go through. And if in the future—there might be even a change of Government—it was for any reason considered inadvisable to carry out the works, people would complain of having been misled into believing that certain railways would be constructed, by the fact that certain sums had been voted for particular railways.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This was the usual procedure.

MR. HOLMAN had consulted the Estimates for last year and for several years, and this had not been the procedure.

MR. JOHNSON: As instancing that this was not the usual procedure, he pointed out that in the cases of the Collie-Narrogin and Jandakot railways, the two Bills were passed by one Government, and the consequent Loan Estimates brought down by another Government. One Parliament having passed the Jandakot line, the succeeding Parliament was bound to carry it out; and personally he had been in the unfortunate position of having, after opposing and voting against the Jandakot railway, to come down to Parliament with Loan Estimates and obtain the necessary funds for that work, to which he was still opposed.

THE TREASURER: Could not the Act have been repealed?

MR. JOHNSON : That would be an extraordinary position for any Minister to take up.

THE TREASURER : It would surely be preferable to wasting money.

MR. JOHNSON : It would not have been fair to the people of the district to repeal the Act when the Government knew that certain expenditure had been entered upon in the district on the strength of the Railway Bill passing. The Premier at the outset stated that this item did not pledge us to the construction of this line; but the Treasurer now stated this was part of the Government policy, and that the vote was for the preliminary expenditure in connection with the construction of the line. Consequently, one was at a loss to know whether by passing the items the Committee was or was not pledging itself to the particular railway; but he was inclined to believe that the Government had included these lines because they had promised them--and they promised them before they had obtained information concerning them. Take the case of the Bridgetown-Wilgarup Railway, in regard to which there was no information. The Government said the money was required to obtain information and start construction, and also for preliminary work. If the money were voted it would pledge the Committee to that particular line. But supposing the Committee voted a lumpsum for surveys generally, the Government could make the survey and obtain information; public opinion, however, would still be able to influence the Government against what might perhaps be an unsuitable route. If, however, the wrong course proposed in these Estimates were taken, public opinion would not have the same effect, for the Government might say, "We have not the information, but we obtained parliamentary authority to construct the line before getting any information." That was not a fair proposition. If, however, as the Treasurer stated, this was a matter of policy, discussion was useless, for if the Government put its foot down and said "This is a question of policy; the fate of the Government is at stake," a vote might as well be taken at once. He was not in a position to say whether the Government were right or wrong in deciding to build these lines; but it was unfair to ask

Parliament to pledge itself to any line before information was given. If the route were not specified, and the people of Bridgetown thought a line in another direction would be preferable, they might be able to influence the Government, who would then not be pledged to any particular line. This was a departure from the usual procedure, and the Government should agree to lump the £20,000 under discussion, so that the people might have an opportunity of saying where these lines should go. Ministers stated they would bring down Bills for railways regarding which they had the required information; but what about the Pinjarrah-Marrenup Railway? This line had been surveyed for years, and thus proved the contention that the survey of a railway under the procedure formerly adopted did not pledge Parliament to the construction of the line.

THE PREMIER : The Pinjarrah-Marra-dong Railway had been surveyed; not the Pinjarrah-Marrenup line.

MR. JOHNSON : This proposed railway followed the same route.

THE PREMIER : It did not; that was the difference.

MR. JOHNSON : Then he had been misinformed. In this case the Committee would be absolutely pledging itself to the construction of a railway not yet surveyed and upon which no information had been obtained. That was a wrong procedure, and the Government should now report progress in order to rectify it.

THE CHAIRMAN : The House had already in the Loan Bill specified these railways.

MR. BATH : Only on the assurance of the Minister that it did not matter, and that the Committee would be bound only by decisions on the Loan Estimates. Surely we were not to be taken up on a point of order such as that, after the Minister's statement.

THE CHAIRMAN : This was not a point of order, but a point of procedure which was entirely in the control of the Committee.

THE TREASURER emphasised the opinion expressed at the previous sitting that the Loan Bill merely authorised the raising of the money, and did not authorise expenditure.

MR. BATH: That was the assurance given last night, but the Chairman said it did. What was the Committee to understand?

THE TREASURER understood there must be an Appropriation Bill before there was authority to expend under these Estimates. Last year the Loan Estimates were passed before the Railway Bills were passed.

MR. BATH: We had all the information.

THE TREASURER: We had introduced the Loan Estimates exactly as we did last year. We were perfectly justified in producing them in this form. He maintained farther that we were taking the House more into our confidence by specifying the different railways than we should be in lumping them together.

MR. BATH: What, without any knowledge of them?

THE TREASURER: Yes; of course, without any knowledge of them yet. We could not have all the knowledge in five minutes. Even if we passed these Estimates it would not commit members to passing a Bill for construction.

MR. JOHNSON: What would the Government do? Waste the money?

THE TREASURER: Members must trust the Government somewhere. We were not going to play the fool with this money. The Government had no intention of proceeding with the actual construction of any of these lines until they had the proper authority by the passing of a Bill. The member for Guildford had misunderstood him. We wanted to make surveys and have plans and specifications. We wished preliminary work to be put in hand until the Railway Bills were passed either this or next session, but the actual construction of any of these lines would not be undertaken without authority.

Item — Busselton - Lower Blackwood, £5,000:

MR. BATH: The Treasurer had just stated that he had no intention of proceeding with the work before a Bill was submitted, but we found here that it said, "Preliminary expenses and commencement of construction works, during the year ending 30th June, 1907."

THE TREASURER: That was provided the Bill passed.

MR. BATH: Were the Government going to introduce a Bill?

THE TREASURER hoped so.

MR. BATH thought there were to be only six.

THE TREASURER: Oh, no.

MR. JOHNSON: Were we given clearly to understand by the Government that they would not start the construction of any of these lines until a Bill was passed?

THE PREMIER was prepared to give the Committee that assurance. The words "Preliminary expenses and commencement of construction works" appeared in some cases, but we could not take any action in regard to construction works until a Bill was passed. In addition to survey there was certain expense incurred. For instance trial holes were generally put down when there was any cutting. When one was going over a river soundings were generally taken to form some idea of the length of piles and that sort of thing. That work was provided for in addition to the cost of survey. He was prepared to give the hon. member an assurance that no actual commencement of any construction work would be undertaken until a Bill had been approved by the House. With regard to the Busselton line, the Treasurer pointed out that negotiations were going on at present in connection with the purchase of the Wonerup line. The Government were prepared to pay £14,000 for these 22 miles of line, but the company owning it had not come to terms. If they did not come to terms the Government intended to introduce a Bill to provide for the construction of the line direct from Busselton.

MR. HOLMAN: Had the assurance members now had been given before, it would have saved a considerable amount of time. He would like an assurance that members would be given a fair and ample opportunity of having a full discussion and full information on the measures when they came before the House.

THE TREASURER: We would get on with them at once, if we got these Estimates through.

MR. HOLMAN: The Standing Orders could be suspended, and Bills passed through all their stages at one sitting.

THE PREMIER: All the discussion on these Railway Bills would be on the second reading.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Harbours and Rivers*, £147,392; *recoup*, £4,231 :

Item—Additions and Improvements to Jetties, Tramways, and Rolling Stock in the North-West, £5,000 :

MR. BATH would like some information from the Treasurer as to the revenue derived from these works, and some idea of the revenue in comparison with the expenditure involved. From the figures he (Mr. Bath) quoted the other night it appeared that outside Fremantle and perhaps Bunbury harbour works this was one of the most unremunerative types of work on which our loan moneys could be spent.

MR. JOHNSON: The general administration in connection with the North-West left considerable room for improvement. He had had some experience of this. He knew the great difficulty under which any Minister laboured in connection with the coast. A huge amount of money had been spent up there, and a considerable portion of it had been washed out to sea. Jetties had been practically swept away, and jetties had been constructed in the wrong places; and roads, bridges and other things had been erected which were not now in existence. He thought that was due to the fact that we had not in the North-West periodic visits from responsible officers or Ministers in order that they could see exactly for themselves what had been done. At present we trusted to officers who were not very high up in the Government service, practically supervisors, and not highly qualified engineers who could give the best advice. The present Treasurer when Minister for Works intended to visit the North-West in order to make inquiries, but he was defeated by reconstruction. He (Mr. Johnson) had meant to undertake the same journey, but he also was defeated by reconstruction. He trusted no other Minister would undertake it for a while until he was practically prepared to resign from the Government. We wanted

more attention given to the North-West. He was not prepared to say we had spent too much money there, for in his opinion the North-West had not received sufficient consideration, but the trouble was that the consideration it had received had not been of the wisest character. Consequently we had had expenditure which would give no practical result to the North-West and consequently no advantage to the State. He hoped the Government would see their way clear to send a responsible officer there once a year.

THE TREASURER agreed that it was necessary that Ministers controlling important departments, more especially the Minister controlling the Works Department, should be afforded facilities to travel to see the works for themselves. During the short time he was in charge of that department he had intended to take a trip to Japan and to spend a fortnight or three weeks in the North-West of this State. As to the wharves, they used to be let by tender, but that was not very satisfactory. The increase brought about by the change and possibly by some increase in the traffic was estimated to be about £7,000. That included all wharves except those at Fremantle, which were under the Harbour Trust, and those at Geraldton, Bunbury, and Albany, which were under the Railway Department. All wharves except those at the four places mentioned came under the Colonial Secretary's Department. He had not the details of the work proposed to be carried out; in fact he did not think the details had been decided upon yet. He would, if possible, make a personal inspection. The Engineer-in-Chief, who had never visited the North-West, should have an opportunity of becoming personally conversant with all works carried out under his supervision. Farther details had not been settled, but would be carefully thought out.

Item—*Fremantle Dock and Slip*, £10,000 :

MR. ANGWIN: Had the Government decided on the class of dock to be provided?

THE TREASURER: No. Full inquiries would be made, and a proposal submitted if possible next session.

Item—Improvements to Harbours and Rivers, £25,000; recoup, £2,722:

MR. JOHNSON: What improvements would be effected on the Swan River between Perth and Guildford? Brick-makers and others should have an opportunity of bringing their products to Perth in barges. The river was silting-up near the Causeway and Bunbury bridges, and a bad bar had formed near the Claisebrook drain. The Minister for Works had agreed that something should be done. For the last three years the silting-up had caused disastrous annual floods, never previously experienced at Guildford, where gardens and orchards had been swept away. These floods were not due to excessive rainfall, but to the silting.

THE TREASURER had not any definite information; but it was intended to try to deepen the channel in the shallow portion of the river. The reclamation of the foreshore at Perth would be continued to Lord Street. The channels in Perth Water would have to be deepened for the convenience of the South Perth ferry steamers. The work of strengthening jetties at Derby, Port Hedland, and Balla Balla and Denham would be undertaken, and some improvements would be effected at the Nornalup Inlet, on the south coast, where it was understood a good harbour could ultimately be constructed at moderate cost. Brickmakers on the Swan had complained that the river was becoming too shallow for barges, but there had been difficulty in getting a dredge up the river to deepen the channel. The Minister for works would consider the matter, and do everything possible.

MR. BATH: As the revenue from some jetties was paid to the Railways, the expenditure should be debited to that department. Last night the Premier said the railway revenue was swollen by £16,000 from the Bunbury jetty. This was bad book-keeping.

THE TREASURER agreed that if the Bunbury jetty were to be a permanent part of the railway system the capital cost and the expenditure should be charged to the railways. Ultimately we should probably have a Bunbury harbour trust; and meanwhile the Railways, as they were working the jetty, considered they should have the revenue.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Water Supply and Sewerage*, £166,523:

Item—Goldfields Water Scheme, £123:

MR. JOHNSON: Had the Attorney General yet convinced the Government that water rates on business places in Hannans Street, Kalgoorlie, should be pooled, and that the sinking fund should not be charged to the revenue of the scheme?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The only sinking fund the Government looked for from the consumers was that on capital cost of local reticulation. To paying this the goldfields people had never objected. Their objection was to paying water rates calculated to return sinking fund on the gross capital. Meanwhile the accounts must show the amount provided for sinking fund from consolidated revenue. As to allowing merchants paying heavy rates for business places to set off water not used therein against that used in their private residences, he had not yet succeeded in convincing the Minister for Works that the alteration was wise. The department still held the illogical dogma that the practice must be continued because it existed in the past.

MR. ANGWIN: Was it fair that the general public should pay the sinking fund on the cost of the main pipe-line?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Undoubtedly.

MR. ANGWIN: Would other works throughout the State be expected to provide sinking funds? The Fremantle Water Scheme provided its own sinking fund.

MR. BATH: If the Attorney General's argument were sound, the people of Fremantle should provide the sinking fund for the Fremantle Harbour Works. It was difficult to differentiate between the indirect benefit derived by the State, and the direct benefit derived by people in particular districts. If we had to engage a staff of accountants to do so we would incur a huge expenditure. Payment for a public service was in no sense taxation. If we sold our railways the company that purchased them would expect the people to pay for the services provided. There was too much tendency

to confuse payment for services rendered, such as the supply of water, or electricity, or railway conveniences, with what was taxation pure and simple. He did not wish to see the goldfields differentiated and made to do this for the water service while others went scot free; but there was need in connection with what were purely services that the people directly benefiting by them should, at least, pay a fair price and something that would pay interest and sinking fund, because the service rendered was infinitely cheaper than it would be if private enterprise were running the same undertaking. If we did not arrive at a sounder basis for our charges for services we would run against disaster in the future.

MR. JOHNSON: Now we knew that the Government would not charge sinking fund against the Coolgardie Water Scheme, he would like an assurance from the Minister that the price for water would be reduced for Guildford and Midland Junction. He, when Minister, initiated the Guildford scheme, and intended to run it to pay interest and sinking fund. That was the sound way of administering such a public service, and any Government that did not work a scheme in that way was not doing justice to the State, but the policy of the present Government was that Kalgoorlie, and those particular districts, should not pay sinking fund on the Coolgardie Water Scheme, while at Northam, Guildford, and towards the coast, sinking fund on the scheme was charged. In basing the price for Guildford and district a certain percentage of the cost of construction of the weir was charged up, and the cost of reticulation was taken, and the two were lumped and the price was fixed so that the revenue would pay interest and sinking fund on that proportion of the capital expenditure, and in those calculations the consumption was based lower than it was originally estimated.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: What was the charge?

MR. JOHNSON: The charge was 1s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons, with 1s. for excess water and a rate of 9d., and that charge was paying interest and sinking fund on the consumption to-day. If the Government desired to do justice to all portions of the State, they must reduce the

price at Guildford. The Attorney General was able to influence the Government not to charge sinking fund at Kalgoorlie—[THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly the same was done by previous Governments]—while the Honorary Minister, the member for Northam, sat silent and allowed his constituents to be charged sinking fund. He (Mr. Johnson) did not intend to allow his constituents to pay sinking fund. They should not be charged sinking fund unless the people of Kalgoorlie were charged sinking fund. He would bring down a deputation to the Minister to ask not only that the reduction be made, but that it be made retrospective as from the beginning of the year.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: There seemed to be an opinion that he thought sinking fund should not be a *sine qua non* on the raising of loans. He did not intend to convey that meaning, being still of opinion that the provision by way of a sinking fund, which had been the rule since we commenced raising money by way of loan, was a wise provision. More especially was it found so to-day, because it strengthened our case in borrowing money on most favourable terms. What he intended to convey was that he considered sinking fund should not be charged to the railways, but that it should be paid by the whole State.

MR. BATH: Yes; and make the poor devil of a worker pay.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: All paid their share. The worker gained the advantage by having employment given to him. Sinking fund was a proper charge to the general revenue of the State. If the railways did pay sinking fund from the earnings it was improper to cause it to continue, because we could obtain an advantage, with sinking fund not charged on the railways, by a reduction in railway rates. The principle of sinking fund charges was one that might be gone into thoroughly. His idea was that sinking fund should never be charged; that we should borrow the money as people usually borrowed it, and that it should be a charge against the work. Such a work as a railway became an improving asset, and one for which, if the country were pleased to sell, it would be hard to know how much we would get. If our railways that cost £9,000,000 were sold

they would probably fetch £30,000,000, even though restrictions were placed on the company purchasing. It was, however, a wise provision that the railways should belong to the State, because we were able to fix the rates so as to improve and develop the country. Sinking fund should not be charged for the specific work to railways any more than to the Coolgardie Water Scheme. The whole country should bear the share of the extra taxation necessary, because the whole country benefited; even the working man, who was perhaps better off to-day than those looked upon as being in affluent circumstances. No matter what we did we would always find some complaining. It was no use bringing up the bogey of the working man. No one had more sympathy with the working man than he did. The working man had to bear his share, but in a much smaller proportion to that borne by people engaged in other occupations. Finally, he contended that the sinking fund was a proper charge on the country generally, and that what should be paid was the actual value for services received, in the same way as rates were paid on the railway.

MR. BATH: One liked to hear an opinion such as that just expressed, because one gathered an idea of what was the intention of those who advocated loan proposals. There was a cartoon which had become historic, drawn by one of the best cartoonists in the old country, illustrating the working man with the the whole burden of society on his shoulders, and the motto underneath was the advice from one of those on top, exhorting the man below, "Bear ye one another's burdens." If the member for Katanning wished to know the position of the working population of the State, he (Mr. Bath) could take the hon. member to places in the metropolitan area and on the goldfields where he would find out what was the proportion of the population bearing the taxation burden of the State.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question was not the working man.

MR. BATH: The member for Katanning was allowed to deal with this question, and it was about due to some hon. members that they should receive the same treatment. He could take the hon. member to places where these people

made their purchases over the counter, where they paid prices infinitely higher than did those people on the goldfields for their water from the scheme, and he would soon ascertain who were paying the greatest portion of the burden of taxation in this State. The position to-day was that even with the reduction per head of the population a working man with a wife and three children paid £60 out of his earnings in taxation to the State.

HON. F. H. PRIESSE: That was a charge against the State; they did not pay that but the interest on it.

MR. BATH was talking of what a man with a wife and three children paid in taxation, and it was £60 on the goldfields because people there paid double what people did in the coastal areas, and when we recognised that the average wage was not much more than £3 10s. per week it was scandalous for anyone to say that these works should be run at a loss and the sinking fund placed on the shoulders of those people who were already called on to pay more than their due share.

Item—Boring for water on stock routes, etc., £15,900:

MR. T. L. BROWN: Was it the intention of the Government to farther assist the Geraldton municipal council in providing a water supply? Geraldton was one of the oldest towns in Western Australia and was still without a water supply. The people had to depend solely on wells, the water from which was not of the best. Some tests had been made and it was found possible to obtain a water supply near the town. He would like to know if the Government intended farther to assist the council.

THE PREMIER: What was the position now.

MR. T. L. BROWN: The Government assisted the council to the extent of £100 to test whether it was possible to secure a supply of pure water in wells situated a little distance from the town. Twenty wells were sunk in which good water was secured. Whether the supply was sufficient for the town remained to be proved.

THE PREMIER: What did the railways use, condensed water?

MR. T. L. BROWN: Yes. Some time ago the council endeavoured to get the Railway Department, before the condenser was erected, to give some guarantee that they would take water from the council if the council floated a loan and obtained a water supply. The Railway Department did not do so, but erected a condenser, which took from the council the only asset they could realise on and one which would return sufficient to the council to insure their paying the interest on the money which they would borrow. The council having lost the supply to the Railway Department were not in a position to go to the money market to borrow £40,000 for a water supply.

THE TREASURER had no information as to the water supply for Geraldton. The proper course would be for the member to interview the Minister for Works. Representations were made about 12 months ago, and he (the Treasurer) then sent someone to inspect the rivers in that locality.

MR. T. L. BROWN: Mr. Pidgeon.

THE TREASURER: He was sent to inspect some rivers to see if a dam could be constructed. The report was unfavourable; the water he thought was brackish. There was no farther information on the matter. If the municipality of Geraldton were prepared to float a loan and construct works, any assistance the Government could render in the flotation of the loan, and also in the consumption of water, would be readily given.

Item—Sewerage for Perth and Fremantle, £135,000:

MR. ANGIN: What amount of the £135,000 was it probable would be spent during the next twelve months in Fremantle, and was it the policy of the Government not to charge Perth and Fremantle with sinking fund?

THE TREASURER: The condition of this work was that there were existing contracts for certain storm-water sewers. The Mount Bay sewer and the Claisebrook treatment works were under way. The delivery of certain pipes had almost commenced, and this would enable the work in connection with the Parry-street sewer and the Subiaco storm-water main to be put in hand. The commencement

of the Fremantle sewerage works and the reticulation of Perth and the supply of pipes were also included. As to how much would be spent in Fremantle he could not give any idea, but it was proposed to start the work in Fremantle. Several of the works were in hand. The contract for the Claisebrook treatment works was let at £21,000; the contract for oval sewer pipes £22,000, and the storm-water main below Parliament House, Mount Bay Road, £21,000. So far as the sinking fund was concerned, the whole of the charges would be billed up against this scheme, and a rate would be struck which would cover the interest and sinking fund together with maintenance and working expenses. The people who got the facilities of deep drainage to their houses would have to pay the necessary charges to cover all costs.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources*, £94,000; *recoup*, £5,041:

Item—Murchison and Peak Hill Goldfields, £18,000:

MR. HOLMAN: There was a necessity for pushing forward the development of the goldfields and mineral resources as quickly as possible. The amount voted for the development of the goldfields was not ample for requirements. The gold yield of Western Australia was falling by some 100,000ozs. a year, and something must be done in the immediate future to stop that falling off. The amount set down for development on the Murchison and Peak Hill Goldfields was £18,000, and almost all that money had been spent. At the present time there were liabilities amounting to £5,113, and £9,000 was to be spent for a water supply at Meekatharra, which would leave very little for goldfield development. The large area of the Murchison Goldfields was well known, and the Peak Hill field was very extensive. There were many promising mining centres without water at the present time. There was Mindula without a water supply. Miners had to carry their drinking water 12 miles. He would like an assurance that the Minister would endeavour to rectify that. There were 60 men at this place, and the men had to leave their shows to go away and

get a supply of water. It took one man to bring water for three men. If the people were able to sink a well it was thought good water could be obtained. He gave the Minister credit for pushing on with the Meekatharra water supply, and he hoped it would be completed in the immediate future. When a water supply was provided, the gold yield at Meekatharra would double. There were other parts around Peak Hill which were neglected, and where a water supply was needed. Three thousand pounds was nothing like adequate for the development of a mining field; the amount should have been trebled. He was not in favour of spending loan funds on unproductive works, but to enable a gold centre to double its production was not an unproductive work. He hoped the Minister would accord the Nannine people fair treatment in regard to their water supply, for which they were now paying at the rate of 12½ per cent. per annum on the cost of construction, the water being charged at 10s. per thousand gallons. Either the price of the water should be reduced to half, or the waterworks handed over to the municipality.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No complaint had been made to him in this matter.

MR. HOLMAN: Perhaps complaints had not been addressed to the Minister, but the people had complained notwithstanding. In connection with the Murchison fields there was the copper centre of Gabanintha, which had produced thousands of pounds worth of copper, though returns had not been furnished to or obtained by the Mines Department. It was most desirable that the department should keep a complete record of these matters. To do good work with the amounts set down on the Estimates would be absolutely impossible. Although last year authority was given for a certain amount, we were now called on to meet out of the £18,000 provided this year a liability of about £5,000, reducing the amount available to £13,000. And one absolutely necessary work alone would absorb £9,000.

THE MINISTER: A good many of the liabilities had been suspended.

MR. HOLMAN was glad to hear it. If the necessary encouragement were given to gold and other mineral resources

there need be no fear for the future of the State. A water supply, however, was a first necessity for every field.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: So large a sum having been provided for goldfields railways on the Loan Estimates, it had been necessary to cut down the Estimates for the development of mining to some slight extent; but hon. members might rest assured that ample provision had been made for the needs of the various districts during this year. He hoped to go through the back mining country again very soon, and see for himself what was necessary for the purpose of aiding development. No doubt a mining field could not possibly have a better asset than a water supply. He wished to inform the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman), who had repeatedly complained that works he had asked for had not been executed, that in no instance where the departmental officers recommended a work had the Ministerial authority for the carrying out of the work been refused. Of course, unless a place was known to himself he had to depend on the advice of the departmental officers in regard to the various requests made by members of Parliament. He could not authorise a work simply because it had been asked for by a member of Parliament: he had necessarily to rely on the officers. However, provided recommendations of officers were forthcoming, works asked for would be carried out. There might have been some little neglect of outlying districts because Ravensthorpe and Norseman had required so much work and the staff available was small. Regarding the Nannine water supply, if anything like a fair proposition were put forward he would be pleased to give it consideration, and the same remark applied to Meekatharra. If the people of either of those centres desired to establish boards for the control of water supply, he would be glad to consider the matter, though one hardly knew whether such an arrangement was possible in the case of Meekatharra, which was a very young community. If, however, the proposals were made and approved—and of course he had to see that the State was protected in regard to borrowings from Savings Bank funds—bonds would be issued and the money for the purpose supplied. He would be glad

to confer with the member for Murchison in regard to the requirements of Nannine and other places mentioned.

MR. HOLMAN was very pleased by the remarks of the Minister. He wished to point out, however, in connection with a request he had made for the sinking of a well on the Wiluna road, which request had presumably been refused on the advice of the departmental officers, that the well was absolutely necessary. The road ran over 20 miles of spinifex sand, over which stretch loaded horses had to travel. It was not possible to travel the whole distance without water, and the teams could make only 9 or 10 miles in a day. Therefore, the teamsters were compelled to take their horses backwards and forwards for water. He spoke from personal knowledge.

THE MINISTER: This matter would be looked into on Monday.

MR. HEITMANN: It was to be regretted that the Minister had not seen fit to set down a greater amount for the Murchison goldfields, for, if there was a field deserving of assistance, it was the Murchison, speaking generally. For many years little outside capital had gone into the field, and the result was that although the mining camps were struggling along altogether—they were very solid—progress was retarded. The best means of assisting the mining industry was, as stated by the Minister, to supply mining camps with water. Cue and Nannine were fairly well off in this respect. The Fingal mine at the present time was taking 15,000 gallons of water per day from the Nannine waterworks, and this, of course, lessened the cost to the small consumer. The smaller mines were also taking advantage of the supply, and generally speaking, the two schemes referred to were successes. The Mindoolah camp, as mentioned by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman), was urgently in need of assistance. The cost of carting ore was £3 per ton, so that unless one was on two or three ounce dirt mining there was not payable. It was a fact that the men at Mindoolah were at present carting water 10 or 12 miles. They were also much handicapped by the want of a battery. He understood the Minister had been requested to assist a private party working a battery there, and he hoped that assistance would be forth-

coming. Mining on the Murchison could also be greatly advanced by the cheapening of fuel. The mines at Day Dawn and Cue were now paying 18s. per ton for firewood, and if that cost could be reduced, through Government assistance towards the construction of a tramway, to 12s. or 13s. the help to small owners and small companies would be great. The Fingal mine was paying 16s. or 17s. per ton, but of course he was not appealing for assistance to that mine, which could well afford the price. The small shows, however, using 50 or 60 cords per week deserved assistance. He believed the Government intended to assist a private party about to build a tramway.

THE MINISTER thought that an endeavour was being made to form a local company for that purpose.

MR. HEITMANN: It was to be feared that those efforts would not prove successful, because the councils of Day Dawn and Cue could not join in the undertaking. Besides, even if a company were formed, the Government would have to provide the greater part of the funds, and there was no guarantee that a private company would work the tramway for the benefit of the mines. Therefore he suggested that the Government should build and work the proposed firewood line.

Item—Pilbarra Goldfields, £25,000:

MR. UNDERWOOD: The member for Cue (Mr. Heitmann) and the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) had mentioned the very great difficulty against which miners had to contend on those fields, on which he had spent some years. He could assure the Committee that those difficulties were nothing as compared with the difficulties on the Pilbarra fields.

MR. HOLMAN: But those centres about which we had been talking were new fields.

MR. UNDERWOOD recognised that the State could not spend too much money on these matters. The Pilbarra goldfield, as described in these Estimates, included West and East Pilbarra, as well as Roebourne and Station Peak.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. UNDERWOOD (continuing): Provision had been made for a town well at Roebourne and wells on the Wodgina-Woodstock road and near Station Peak, and although these were in the Pilbarra Goldfield they were really pastoral wells, Roebourne and other places mentioned having very little to do with mining; and while other wells had also been provided for beyond Nullagine, on the road to Roy Hill, and on the track to Peak Hill and the Eastern Goldfields, the vote, considering the area embraced in the Pilbarra Goldfield, was small. There was every likelihood of farther discoveries being made almost any day, and in fact fresh discoveries were being made now within this field. The Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 23, showed that the Wodgina portion of the Pilbarra Goldfield covered an area of at least 2,400 square miles, the belt extending 80 miles north-west and south-east by a width of about 30 miles. The report stated also that in all probability, as a result of prospecting then proceeding, other centres equally as good as Wodgina would be discovered. And in this the geologist had proved a true prophet, for since his visit two new centres had been opened up. One of these, the Bright Star, was 20 miles south of Wodgina, and the other, not yet recorded in the newspapers, was at Mt. Francisco, south-east of Wodgina. Again, the geologist had been correct in his assumption that possibly the Nullagine-Sandy Creek zone would be found to extend across the head waters of the Oakover River. During the winter before last a discovery was made in this region. While the surface water remained, 60 or 70 men were there, but the water dried up and the prospectors had not been able to get into that country since. The amount provided might suffice for the known requirements of the district, but a farther sum should be provided for new fields that were almost certain to be discovered in that locality. However, he was not in a mood to complain of the treatment his district had received, seeing that a start was to be made with the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway, and that the harbour at Port Hedland was to be put in such a condition as would permit vessels to enter or go out at any tide. Farther provision would undoubtedly be required

for the development of the mineral resources of the district, and he felt sure that there would be a considerable boom in perhaps both East and West Pilbarra during the coming year.

MR. T. L. BROWN: What were the intentions of the Government with regard to farther testing the coal deposits on Depot Hill, near Geraldton? We had it from persons who were in a position to know that there were rich coal deposits there, and with the requirements of the Murchison to be met in the matter of fuel supply, it would be in the interests of the State to test these deposits with a view to their development, there being very little prospect of getting fuel in the shape of timber. The largest mines at present were using Newcastle coal. Coal on the Irwin River had been tested and proved to be of good quality. A local company at Depot Hill was now investing money in farther tests, and in the circumstances it was not unreasonable to expect assistance from the Government. Having heard the Minister for Mines speaking at Geraldton on this question he was certain that the hon. gentleman would afford every assistance possible.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Some time ago the Government subsidised a company in that district, but their attempt to prove the coal deposits had resulted in failure, as also had the experiments subsequently made by the Government of putting down bores to test the deposits. At the present time the Government were having several shallow bores put down, and were also subsidising the local company referred to. The hon. member might rest assured that every effort would be made with a view of getting a payable coal seam in that district. Where the Government found outsiders coming in they were willing to give them every assistance. Independently of the benefit that would accrue to the Geraldton district, every effort would be made to locate the seam, the Government recognising the necessity for local coal on the Murchison field.

MR. EWING: When in that district recently he had seen Newcastle coal being forwarded to the Murchison and he had endeavoured to have Collie coal taken up there, but the Commissioner of Railways had demanded the full price of five-sixths of a penny per ton per train mile for its

carriage over the railway, while the Midland Company were prepared to carry it at three-eighths of a penny, notwithstanding that they had to pay something like 1s. 9d. per truck running charges over the Government railways. In Victoria local coal was carried 148 miles for 4s. 9d. per ton, while Newcastle coal was charged that sum for being carried 50 miles, which meant that a subsidy of 98 miles was given to the local fuel.

Item — Development of Mining, £15,000; recap, £2,461 :

MR. BATH was in agreement with the remarks made by the Minister on the previous vote. These mining fields could not be better assisted than by providing efficient water supplies, which were very essential to operations on such fields as Meekatharra, Black Range and Davyhurst. Mention had been made of the reduction in the gold yield, but whilst we had such fields as Meekatharra, Black Range and Burtville developed, even though the yield was slightly less they did more good to the people of the State than even a higher yield in Kalgoorlie, because the properties on those fields were owned independently by the men on the spot and whatever profits accrued from their operations were spent within the confines of the State. This coal industry should be developed and assisted in common with other industries; but we had the Minister's own statement as to the paucity of successful results from the assistance given for the development of mining and in assisting prospectors in going round to discover new fields. Much had been thus expended with trivial results. The information as to how this vote would be spent was meagre, and it would be more directly and indirectly reproductive if used to provide water supply and to supplement the general revenue vote for State batteries. A return presented this session showed that little good resulted from assisting prospecting parties; and the State Batteries vote was only £2,000.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : Recently the department invited the public to apply for assistance towards the erection of a tin-dressing plant at Wodgina. About £1,500 would probably be advanced for this purpose. Owners of other mining properties would receive

advances to purchase machinery. It was not much use advancing money to prospectors for development work. Good might occasionally be done, but generally the person with most cheek and the ability to prepare a specious case received the assistance, and in four cases out of five the results were *nil*. The desire was to help people by methods that would benefit them and the country also. Machinery was always an asset; and the borrower, as he paid part of the cost, was probably a genuine man. This vote, and the item on the general Estimates, would provide all the assistance needed for the year. He hoped for far better results in the future than were secured in the past; yet some good results had been shown, especially in the case of the Carbine mine, to which £800 was advanced to sink for water. Water was secured, and the department repaid with interest.

MR. TROY : The Mulgabbie advance was also repaid.

THE MINISTER : Yes; but too often there was no return. In the old days Mr. Lefroy, when Minister for Mines, subsidised at so much per foot a deep-sinking proposition on the Norseman goldfield. The general public would have been benefited by the success of that scheme, but the sum advanced was lost. The principal feature of the present policy was to encourage the formation of local companies. This would be done only once in each district; and as in the past, the department would have a lien on the property assisted, and the shareholders would receive no profits at all till the Government was repaid. In the Norseman case there was no such covenant; but the Government were bound to expend the full amount promised, and were glad to get out of the bargain. He would try to reserve this fund either for subsidies to batteries or for advances to purchase machinery. Money would be expended in boring for coal in the Geraldton district. Next winter an exhaustive geological examination of the country between Carnarvon and Onslow, especially for the baser metals, would be made by a strong party. Wonderfully rich copper was found in that district; mica was present; a lead belt ran through the country; and coal probably existed,

as well as enormous deposits of phenomenally rich iron ore.

MR. SCADDAN endorsed many of the Minister's remarks; but we were probably paying too much attention to opening up new fields instead of thoroughly testing fields now existing. In almost all outback districts we found no more than one or two mines at each town, while the surrounding country was practically untouched by the pick. The State should equip more than one diamond-drill boring party, to test the lodes at depth on all opened fields. Kalgoorlie itself could stand such a test at both the north and south ends of the Belt, which had never been practically tested. Leonora and Gwalia were other cases in point. The Sons of Gwalia and the Tower Hill were the only mines at the latter place, and one could walk for miles in any direction from Gwalia without finding the slightest pretence of prospecting.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was the Sons of Gwalia South.

MR. SCADDAN: That immediately adjoined the Sons of Gwalia. Such was the result of the clamour for opening up new finds, the Government providing camels and other assistance to prospectors. Many opened fields had been tested to the water level only. A good water supply and good machinery were needed to enable owners to pass the water level; and we must provide cheap rail and road facilities. Good roads were practically non-existent in the outback districts, machinery being carried over roads almost impassable. A lode was surely not confined to the area of one lease. In Victoria exceptionally good work had been done by diamond-drilling parties. It was difficult to discriminate in giving assistance to prospectors, some of whom were too modest to ask for assistance, but would take it if offered, while others pegged out a show, and without practically testing it agitated for State help, and, perhaps by influence, obtained money which was virtually thrown away. All such claims should be considered by mining boards. Recently, when in the Greenbushes district, he heard of assistance to a party prospecting for a tin lode. It was rumoured the subsidy would be about £2 for £1, and that it would be given for political reasons.

As a matter of fact the statement was made to him—how far it was true he did not know—that the gentlemen who received the promise of the subsidy had no mine; though they hoped to obtain a mine they had their eyes on when they received the assistance. This was a case of a syndicate without a mine receiving assistance from the Government. Such things should not exist. There were plenty of genuine prospectors, and plenty of places the State could prospect. Genuine prospectors should receive the first consideration. We were not developing our goldfields in the right direction, and we were too eager to open new fields without thoroughly prospecting and testing those we already had.

MR. TROY particularly desired to refer to the statement made by the Minister, and also by the member for Ivanhoe, that the people who received assistance in the past were those who had the most cheek.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES had said "sometimes they were."

MR. TROY was glad the Minister modified the statement, because in these matters the Minister was guided by the State Mining Engineer. He (Mr. Troy) could not get assistance for prospectors in his district until after the State Mining Engineer reported on the property, and if people had cheek it did not avail them in the circumstances. However, one did not feel that after all the most deserving people got the assistance. Few legitimate prospectors, who stuck to their properties and tried by their individual efforts to develop them, received assistance. The people who had received assistance were those formed into small syndicates with a little capital, and often the legitimate prospector, working his mine himself, could not get assistance because a syndicate in his district had already received assistance. Probably the Minister believed that he was doing right in assisting the syndicates. A great trouble in connection with this assistance was the delays that took place. He knew a party who worked the show for six years to considerably below water level, and after spending all their money asked for a grant, but some time elapsed before the assistance was granted. Mr. Ward, a prospector at Mount Magnet, had received a promise of assistance, but months had gone by, and the inspector of

mines, who was supposed to report on the property for the department, had not visited the proposition; and Mr. Ward now wrote to him (Mr. Troy), saying that he did not know whether he could keep on any longer. What was objectionable in these matters was that the Minister made plenty of promises, but was too long in fulfilling them, so that prospectors became discouraged. The genuine prospector never made an application for assistance unless he was hard pushed; but if he did make an application he had to wait months before getting any reply. That retarded mining development. He (Mr. Troy) could not agree with the member for Ivanhoe who discouraged opening up new localities, preferring to assist old localities. The proper thing to do was to encourage the opening up of new localities, because the residents of old localities would open them up. In old localities people had made their homes, and if the localities became less prosperous for a time, they would take steps to farther develop them. Thus the older districts would go ahead again and prosper. There was an instance of this at Boogardie. A few years ago the place was looked upon as almost deserted; people said the district had suffered out, but to day the place was one of the most promising on the Murchison because of the erection by the Government of a public battery, which people had said was going to be a white elephant. Another thing that tended to the present state of Boogardie, was that people who had gone there in the early days of the field had made their homes there and could not leave the district, and so had turned their attention to the farther development of the field. Persons who did leave the district went farther afield and opened up new country. The farther we could extend mining development in every direction the better it would be for the State. The best thing to do was to encourage prospectors to go farther out. It would encourage them to do so if rewards were offered. The fact of a reward of £300 being offered had led to the discovery of Black Range. Another matter that would materially assist in the development of the mining industry was the provision of water. Our minerals were generally located in the most arid portions of the State, and if we wished

people to go out into those arid portions to discover new fields we must provide water for them. Unquestionably the Government had already done good work in this direction. It was chiefly due to their efforts in providing water supplies that many new fields had recently been found and that older districts had been more fully developed. However, there were places where the prospector could not go, owing to the lack of water supply. To the south of Black Range there was a district known to be very promising; that was the Lake Barlee country. Many prospectors had failed in endeavouring to get into that country to open it up, on account of the want of water. The Black Range field was well provided in this respect with bores every ten or fifteen miles; and the prospector made his camp at these bores, and was able to go out to open up new localities. If the same thing were done in the Lake Barlee district probably another new field would open up. According to the small amount on these Estimates we were not going to have many public batteries this year. The Minister was going to spend the money in subsidising batteries. He (Mr. Troy) did not believe in subsidising batteries, because subsidised batteries did not give satisfaction to the prospector; he believed in the public battery system. Though we heard a great deal against that system, as we heard complaints against every public service, it had done a great deal to open up the State. The prospector did not get any benefit from his sand or slimes at most of the subsidised batteries, but at public batteries the gold contained in the slimes and sands went to the prospector. In many localities there was more gold passed into the sands than was obtained through the crushing, and if the prospector could not get the gold contents of his sands he could not carry on. He (Mr. Troy) hoped the subsidising of batteries would not be carried too far. If it was worth while encouraging a private person to put up a battery, it was worth the Government's while to put up a battery themselves. The Minister's desire to provide machinery for the development of properties was a good suggestion. On the Murchison, where this assistance could be given, the people residing in the district did most towards mining development and keeping the

goldfield going. There was very little imported capital now employed there. With the exception of one big mine, the money spent on the field was won from the stone crushed, and the goldfield was second in importance in the State. If we advanced money on machinery, the machinery would be security for the money advanced. That policy could not be extended too far for we must depend on the leaseholder and the prospector for mining development. In some localities mining companies were purchasing properties, but that did not exist to the same extent that it did 10 years ago. A company would not purchase a property to-day until there was a profit in view. In the majority of cases the people on whom we must depend to develop the mining industry were those persons residing in the State, and who owned properties, and we should give them assistance to develop their shows. In regard to boring for lodes, in some instances that had worked good, but in other instances it had served no purpose. The State Mining Engineer should visit the locality where the boring was required and pick out the most promising lode, and on that property the bore should be put down. If the Government put down a bore everywhere that people thought a lode existed a lot of money would be expended. It was to be hoped the money provided would be expended. Last year a large sum of money was provided for the encouragement of mining on the Murchison, but the full amount was not expended, and there was good reason why the money should have been spent in providing water supplies. It was no use voting money unless we intended to spend it. Next year he hoped we should find that the money now voted had all been expended.

MR. SCADDAN had not said we should not encourage prospectors to open up new fields. He had said that possibly we paid too much attention in that direction while we neglected fields that had already been opened up but had not been tested thoroughly.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Development of Agriculture, £109,759; *recoup*, £59,641:

Item: Development of Agriculture, £17,500:

MR. BATH: If we took the particulars of expenditure in past years the effort had not been so much to expend the money on reproductive works as to spend it in the opposite direction. If members turned to the public accounts for the year ending 30th June, 1906, they would see the particulars of expenditure itemised. There was "Experimental farms and stations." He did not know, as far as Western Australia was concerned, that our experimental farms had been of a reproductive character, but rather sinks in which the taxpayers' money was placed without return. Then came "Clearing and snagging," "Fruit disinfecting shed, Fremantle," "Vasse butter factory." He had never seen any return in connection with the Vasse butter factory, and it did not seem to be a desirable work in which to invest loan money. Then we had the "Purchase of a motor wagon, £943." He was told the blackfellows somewhere outback were experimenting with that motor wagon. At any rate it was fast becoming scrap metal. Then we had the "Construction of agricultural buildings on the Royal Show Ground, Claremont," "Purchase of wire netting £472," "Pens for egg-laying competition, Subiaco." The egg-laying competition might be reproductive as far as the eggs were concerned, but it did not bring in much revenue to the State. Then there was a "Glass house for breeding parasites." That was reproductive as far as the parasites were concerned, but it was difficult to see what revenue it brought into the State. These were evidently the kind of works on which the vote for the development of agriculture was expended. It was about time some better channel was found for the expenditure of this money. The Government could not do better than make a vote of this kind the preliminary expenditure for establishing an export depot for farmers. If the Government started to provide depots at Albany and Fremantle the money would not only be more useful to the farmers of the State, but more remunerate as far as the State finances were concerned. In South Australia the export depot had been of immense assistance to the farmers of the State, and last year a profit of 3½ per cent. over working expenses was made. He had spoken to the farmers

of South Australia and members of the Legislative Assembly of that State, and they stated this export depot had been of immense good in assisting the farmers, especially the small farmers, those in a moderate way, in the direction of marketing their produce and getting a fair price without the intervention of rings and financial institutions. He recommended to the Minister in connection with this vote to exercise greater care in seeing that the money was expended in some reproductive channels.

THE PREMIER agreed with many of the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, especially in regard to the item referring to the purchase of a motor waggon. He believed the motor waggon was now only valued as scrap iron. An effort was made to let it by tender, and the individual who purchased it was unable to pay for the hire, and the waggon broke down all the culverts in the vicinity of his farm. As to the establishing of an export depot, that was engaging the attention of the Minister for Agriculture, and we intended as far as possible to make some provision during next year to provide for freezing works at Fremantle if possible. There was a total amount on the Loan Schedule of £200,000 for the development of agriculture, and it was proposed to allocate £30,000 for freezing works. In regard to the question of drainage not being a reproductive work—

MR. BATH: Nothing was said about drainage; he had referred to clearing and snagging.

THE PREMIER: That was really drainage, for a large amount of this vote was spent in clearing and snagging the Harvey River, and until that was done it was impossible for the subsidiary drains to be of value. Land had thus been brought under cultivation which would have been of no value otherwise. A portion of the vote was for special settlement, clearing, and water supply for the lands lying east of the Great Southern Railway and in the vicinity of the Eastern Goldfields Railway. At the present time considerable difficulty was experienced by settlers who had taken up land 30 or 40 miles out from the Great Southern Railway, and he had issued instructions to the various officers in that locality to give him every possible information so

that provision could be made for the construction of certain dams, and as far as possible to do all we could to supply water prior to the settlement in that vicinity. We had had a little difficulty in connection with the water trouble east of the Dumbleyung Railway. At the present time the Government were putting down bores in that locality, and in many cases a good supply of water had been struck at a depth of 100ft. It was intended to put down wells, and if water could not be found, to make provision for dams. A certain amount was provided for grain sheds, and also clearing tracks to agricultural lands. That practically completed the expenditure as far as the Lands Department was concerned, although in the Agricultural Department there was a sum last year expended in the purchase of a farm for £2,641 to increase the value of the present farm at Narrogin. This land was procured at a bargain. It adjoined the railway line, and had siding access, and thus would go far to make the Narrogin farm a profitable undertaking.

MR. ANGWIN: This item included an amount of £7,000 to be expended at the Narrogin farm, which the Honorary Minister had condemned on a recent evening, stating that it was not in a suitable locality, and that the land was of poor quality and altogether unsuitable for an experimental farm. Did the Premier think it advisable to incur that expenditure on such a property?

THE PREMIER: With the acquisition of the new purchase there was every prospect that this farm, particularly under the careful attention of the Minister for Agriculture, would become profitable. Provision was made for certain expenditure on buildings to provide accommodation for additional students, and it was the Minister's intention, instead of charging students the nominal fee of two guineas per annum now obtaining, to charge something like £10 per annum, and to give some little technical training in addition to the practical experience now imparted. The late Agent General, Mr. Walter James, had impressed on the Government the necessity for keeping these farms in operation, since they encouraged a good class of young settler, who was prepared, after some little experience on the farms, to

take up land in the vicinity. Not having been present when the Honorary Minister spoke on this subject, he was rather at a loss as to what was actually said. However, he was satisfied that under the Honorary Minister's management there was every prospect that these farms would at least pay expenses.

MR. ANGWIN: One would think that by far the better course would be to establish a new farm in a more suitable locality by means of this money, instead of expending the sum on the Narrogin farm.

Item — Agricultural immigration, £5,000 :

MR. HEITMANN: Information on this item was most desirable. There was cause for dissatisfaction at the class of assisted immigrants. No one objected to the coming of people prepared to settle on the land and necessarily possessing some little capital, but there was strong objection to the sending of public money, especially at this juncture, to England for the purpose of bringing paupers to the State. The return laid on the table some time ago as the result of a motion, showed clearly that many of the people who had been assisted by the taxpayers' money to come here were simply paupers, a large percentage immediately on landing being compelled to apply to the Labour Bureau for employment.

THE TREASURER: Were not those people who settled on the land without any money doing well?

MR. HEITMANN: There was no objection to such people. One man had landed possessing only £2 12s. to go on the land with.

THE TREASURER: What had the man being doing since?

MR. HEITMANN: Looking for work. Decided objection must be taken to the Government policy in this respect, up to date.

MR. BATH: One would be glad to know whether the intention of the Government was to spend the greater portion of this money in endeavouring to secure immigrants from the Eastern States rather than from the old world. Experience of the two classes of immigrants in Western Australia was that settlers from South Australia, Victoria,

and New South Wales were much the superior class and did better, in many instances setting an example to those already on the land. On this item he wished to draw the Premier's attention to a matter which had been raised in the form of a question to-day. He believed that the gentleman referred to in the question, who undoubtedly had done good work for this State in advertising its resources in the East and securing immigrants there, had not been well treated—in fact, had been unjustly treated by the department. If that gentleman had been compelled to resign his position, it was due not to any lack of energy or ability, but rather to the manner in which he had been treated by his assistant. If the statements in the correspondence were correct, the officer had not been given a fair opportunity. In spite of all drawbacks, however, he had introduced many hundreds of settlers, a fine class of settlers, men squeezed out from the Eastern States by the drought, men who thoroughly understood their business. If the Government intended to pursue the course which he (Mr. Bath) had indicated, they could not do better than re-engage this gentleman and pay him an adequate salary to continue his good work.

THE PREMIER: The gentleman referred to had, he thought, been fairly treated. While in the East the officer was taken ill, and it was practically impossible for him to carry on his work. Eventually returning to Western Australia, he spent some considerable time in lecturing in the timber districts. As all of us were aware, unfortunately the officer labourer under a very sad affliction, and on many occasions the information given at his lectures was rather misleading, especially when, lecturing with a magic lantern, he described totally different scenes from those represented on the slides. Instances of this had been reported to the department; consequently the officer's efforts were, in many cases, misleading.

MR. BATH: Had the officer an assistant?

THE PREMIER: Yes; but unfortunately the assistant, who was engaged in the East, was unacquainted with the principal scenes which the lecturer was describing.

MR. BATH: The Lands Department had, during his administration, sent East an officer with the object of furnishing the lecturer with an assistant who was acquainted with the agricultural districts of Western Australia. The selection, however, turned out unfortunate.

THE PREMIER: It must be remembered, too, that Mr. Wilbur, although an excellent lecturer, had only knowledge obtained from books; he was not a practical man in any way, and could not describe a district as a practical man would. Mr. Wilbur had a splendid memory, and his lectures were simply efforts of memory. It was considered better, therefore, to send a man possessed, from personal observation, of a practical knowledge of our agricultural districts. Undoubtedly Mr. Wilbur had done good work, and he had been fairly treated in being allowed three months' leave of absence. Mr. Wilbur asked that the salary might be paid immediately, as he intended to stand for Parliament. However, he eventually decided not to embark on a contest. The Leader of the Opposition might read the file. In regard to the failures among immigrants mentioned by the member for Cue (Mr. Heitmann), he thought that, taking them all round, we were to be congratulated on the class of settlers introduced. Unfortunately many who came out with the idea of taking up land were absolutely unaccustomed to and unacquainted with farming. The Leader of the Opposition was right in his contention that settlers from the Eastern States were the best, provided we could get them. Such settlers had very little to learn, particularly as they were acquainted with the climatic conditions; indeed, they had taught our old farmers a good many points, especially as to clearing. Under the new settlers' system, the cost amounted to only £1 per acre as against £3 under the old system. He might point out to the member for Cue that New South Wales was doing everything possible to encourage immigration from the old country, and was advertising that work was available for 500 men.

MR. HEITMANN: We could not advertise that.

THE PREMIER: We were not doing so. The Agent General had received definite instructions not to encourage

any immigrants unless they were possessed of sufficient capital to enable them to go on the land, or unless they were coming here to seek employment in agricultural pursuits.

Item—Rabbit-proof Fence, £68,753 ; recoup, £57,247 :

MR. HOLMAN: The Attorney General should furnish an explanation of this item. It was expected that the hon. gentleman would move its excision, seeing that he desired to gain a position of greater respect than any of his predecessors. Here was a splendid opportunity. Recognising the impossibility of constructing this fence out of revenue quickly enough to allow of its being of any practical use, he himself had favoured the construction out of loan funds. The Minister, however, had declaimed strongly against the rabbit-proof fence or roads and bridges being constructed out of loan funds. The fact that the hon. member now held the position of Attorney General in a Ministry proposing these things made one marvel to what positions men would stoop for a portfolio. Last year in speaking on this item the Attorney General said it was not sufficient excuse for one to advance that a similar step had been taken by other parties, and that he hoped there would be some man strong enough to resist the example of evil precedent; yet we now found him coming down proposing to spend a far greater amount on the rabbit-proof fence than the Labour Government did. The Attorney General had gained his seat practically in condemnation of the Labour Government for expending loan moneys on the construction of the rabbit-proof fence, and we found him in the unenviable position of having to do the same thing himself. Either he had lost his self-respect, if he ever had any, or had failed to carry out his pledge to the people of Kalgoorlie. One would like to ask the Attorney General for some reason for his changed attitude.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member commenced by saying that he himself favoured the rabbit-proof fence being constructed out of loan funds.

MR. HOLMAN: Under the circumstances; yes.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Under what circumstances? The hon. member

was in favour of it without qualification.

MR. HOLMAN: The hon. gentleman was wrong.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: At the time the hon. member spoke he favoured it without qualification. When the Government to which the hon. member belonged came into power, they found a considerable portion of the rabbit-proof fence had been constructed out of revenue in that financial year; and what happened was this: not only was the system altered, but they recouped themselves from loan for moneys contributed out of revenue for the fence. They thus replenished the revenue in a manner which he (the Attorney General) submitted was not on the face of it honest and fair. He had the same objection to the construction of the fence out of loan money as he had in the past, but the position was that unless this portion somewhere near Condon was finished the whole value of the work would be in jeopardy, for there would be a gap there through which the rabbits would come. The revenue this year was not in a position to meet that expenditure.

MR. JOHNSON: Were not other people in the same position?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: We must either leave the fence as it should not be left, or we must construct it out of loan funds.

MR. SCADDAN: That was the position two years ago.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was it?

LABOUR MEMBERS: Yes.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Surely members would not say that the financial position two years ago was the same as to-day?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes; absolutely.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Then the hon. member was setting up a proposition that he had no hope of proving. When Mr. Daglish's Government came into power they had a surplus.

MR. JOHNSON: There was a loss on the year of £148,000.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: When the Daglish Government came into power they had a surplus. At the time they decided to construct out of loan moneys, not out of revenue, they had a surplus, so far as they knew, in their coffers.

MEMBER: Bunkum!

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was it not a fact that when the Daglish Government came into power there was a surplus in the State?

MR. JOHNSON: They could see that the Government would make a loss.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was he wrong in saying that when the Daglish Government came into power there was a surplus?

MR. JOHNSON: There was a loss on the year's operations.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Why not give a straight answer?

MR. BATH: Because the hon. gentleman was not putting a straight question?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The question put was the simplest question one person could address to another.

MR. BATH: No; it was a crooked question.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was or was there not a surplus? As members opposite would not answer he would do so for them.

MR. SCADDAN: There was a smaller surplus than 12 months previously, showing that there would be a deficit subsequently.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Having an entirely different position from that which existed to-day, they determined to construct the fence out of loan moneys. If we had a revenue showing a surplus, as the Daglish Government had, the argument advanced would be justifiable. But surely the member for Guildford would not advance the proposition that the financial position to-day was the same as it was in June 1904?

MR. JOHNSON: It was exactly the same.

MR. BATH: The present Government were £208 better off than were the Government in 1904.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was glad the hon. member was not the Treasurer of the State.

MR. JOHNSON: The finances were in a better position.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Entirely differed from the hon. member. In regard to the rabbit-proof fence it was put forward by those who had the right to speak on a work of this kind that the work was not merely necessary but necessary at the immediate moment. If our revenue

at all permitted of the work being done only out of revenue it should be done out of revenue, and if the revenue would not allow of it the work should be postponed, if not necessary. But if neither of those courses was adopted we had to face the inevitable, and construct the fence out of loan funds.

MR. HOLMAN: It was very pleasing to hear the wriggle of the Attorney General. The hon. member's excuse for spending loan funds on the rabbit-proof fence was that there was not sufficient revenue.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was none at all.

MR. HOLMAN: There was likely to be less if the same system of government continued as had been carried on in the last six months. The hon. gentleman said that the Labour Government took back money spent on the rabbit-proof fence. The Government of which the hon. member was a member did worse than that; they took back money spent on roads and public buildings. The Labour Government pushed forward the rabbit-proof fence in order to save the country from an inrush of rabbits. Had the work been carried out in a systematic manner before they took office there would have been no necessity for them to push on the work. The excuse now was that there was a gap in the fence, which must be filled. This was not the first time we had heard of a gap. After the hon. gentleman had stated that he was opposed to the expenditure of loan funds on the rabbit-proof fence a gap came into the Ministry and he filled it. Swallowing his convictions he was now prepared to defend what he opposed only a few months ago.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: What about the gap the hon. member made in the Daglish Government?

MR. HOLMAN had gone to Nannine, and in his absence a gap happened in the Ministry, with disastrous results to the State. The Labour Government were obliged to spend loan money on the fence.

MR. TROY supported the last speaker. One could forgive the Attorney General if he showed signs of repentance for abandoning his high principles announced twelve months ago when he contested

Kalgoorlie with Mr. Johnson, and opposed the very action he now supported.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL had never said the present action was justified by precedent. The hon. member's statement should be withdrawn.

THE CHAIRMAN: If made, the statement must be withdrawn.

MR. TROY had merely said the Attorney General assumed he was justified by the precedent established by the Labour Government; but their expenditure on the fence prevented the country from being overrun by rabbits. The James Government had spent £70,000 on 100 miles of fencing, which took 12 months to erect, during which the rabbits got past, and so the money was wasted. The Labour Government had erected 800 miles in 12 months, and little was done by successive Governments. The Attorney General must not try to browbeat members when reminded of his misdeeds. A year ago, when seeking election, he (Mr. Troy) had to fight statements made by the hon. member. To fulfil his election pledges the Attorney General should move that this item be struck out.

MR. BATH: When the Attorney General contested Kalgoorlie in 1905—

MR. JOHNSON: He won his election by opposing this very expenditure.

MR. BATH: And spoke in a manner which would have been vain-glorious in an angel from heaven; but after actions so inconsistent with his election pledges, he would go back there a man of common clay. His speeches, eloquently expressed, were full of encomiums of honourable finance. The Mr. Keenan of 1905—

THE TREASURER: Was the hon. member in order in discussing Mr. Keenan instead of the rabbit-proof fence?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was in order in replying.

MR. BATH: As an excuse for his abandonment of principle the Attorney General said revenue was not now available, and hence he must vote for constructing the fence out of loan. But according to their own Estimates the Government had a credit balance larger by £208 than the Labour Government. This balance resulted from increased revenue under various headings, and the stoppage of expenditure on the Phillips River smelter, allowing for the smaller amount returned by the Commonwealth.

The figures were given by the member for Subiaco and not disputed by the Treasurer.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: With much the same revenue the present Government were faced with a heavier expenditure under such votes as Education.

MR. BATH: The Minister interrupting would have justified himself in a speech had he been able. The Attorney General could not, consistently with his previous utterances, acquiesce in this vote.

MR. SCADDAN: Speaking last year on the Estimates, the Attorney General said that at the last election the Labour Government were distinctly charged with constructing the rabbit-proof fence out of loan.

THE CHAIRMAN: That speech had already been quoted by Mr. Holman. This discussion could not proceed unless a definite amendment were moved on the item.

MR. SCADDAN moved an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £7,247. The Attorney General was pledged to strike out the item, and had said to-night, in justification of his attitude, that it was impossible to find the revenue to construct the rabbit-proof fence, and that there was a gap in the fence that required stopping; but last year in reply to an interjection that the Labour Government were compelled to build the second fence out of loan, the Attorney General said that it did not matter if we had to build six fences we should not do it out of loan moneys. If we should not use loan moneys to build six fences, surely the same argument should apply to stopping a gap in one fence. The present attitude of the Attorney General was utterly incomprehensible. One would not like to assert that it was because the hon. gentleman was a member of the Cabinet. The hon. gentleman would have an opportunity of showing the Kalgoorlie electors that, in spite of being a member of the Cabinet, he would stand up to the principles he advocated two years ago in opposition to the then sitting member.

MR. COLLIER: To this question of spending loan moneys on the rabbit-proof fence he had always been opposed, and he intended to support the amend-

ment to reduce the item. One could not help being struck with the clever way in which the Attorney General evaded the point at issue. The Attorney General endeavoured to justify his actions to-day on the ground that we had a deficit, but when the Attorney General condemned the Rason Government for constructing this fence out of loan moneys there was also a deficit, and a prospect of a much larger deficit ahead. The argument the Attorney General now advanced would have been a good argument last year, but at that time the Attorney General had an alternative method of raising money and said that if we had not sufficient revenue with which to construct the fence we should make the squatters pay for it. The hon. gentleman had forgotten that to-day. The hon. gentleman said last year that if the revenue was insufficient to provide funds for the work we had a legitimate claim on those who derived benefit from the construction of the fence to make some contribution towards the work, and that if such a proposal had been made, not on drastic lines but on sensible lines, the State might not be called upon to pay for the fence out of loan funds. We heard nothing about that to-day now that the Attorney General was in the Ministry.

MR. JOHNSON supported the amendment because he believed that our difficulties to-day were not as great as they were when the Attorney General condemned this vote some twelve months ago. Our revenue to-day was really better than it was when the Labour Government were forced to construct the fence out of loan moneys, and we were to have a special session of Parliament to raise more revenue still, so that we could carry out the principle so ably defended by the Attorney General when the hon. gentleman was a private member. The Attorney General gained his seat on his advocacy of this particular matter by appealing to the people of Kalgoorlie to elect him to defend the country against expenditure of this description, and now the hon. member supported the Government in their desire to continue this expenditure. However, there were numerous instances of how members of the Government absolutely violated pledges given at the last election. We could understand why some members were

against giving a written pledge. It would not give them sufficient latitude. They would not sign a pledge because if there was a place in the Ministry offering they would be free to sacrifice their principles. He (Mr. Johnson) felt bitter on this matter because he lost his seat in Parliament through being guilty, under more exceptional circumstances than now existed, of spending loan moneys on the rabbit-proof fence. The Attorney General should admit having misled the people of Kalgoorlie, and that he was wrong in condemning the previous member for Kalgoorlie for loan expenditure on the rabbit-proof fence. The hon. member should promise that next year he would endeavour not only to stop the expenditure of loan funds on the rabbit-proof fence, but also on asylums, buildings, and roads and such like that were constructed out of revenue by the Government the Attorney General condemned two years ago. These things were pointed out to the Attorney General to get him to amend his ways in the future, and so that he could be true to the people who elected him. The hon. member, though he had not given a written pledge, should adhere to his spoken pledge.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for Guildford congratulated himself, though no one else would, that he lost his election on a comparatively small issue. There were far wider and graver differences than the question of loan expenditure on items such as the rabbit-proof fence. It had already been made clear that it was pointed out by those who were in a position to know, that the work of constructing the rabbit-proof fence must be carried out immediately or it was no good doing the work at all, and the whole benefit of the past expenditure in constructing about 2,000 miles of fencing would be useless. We had two choices. We must consent to the work being done out of the only available money, loan funds, or we must consent to sacrificing all that had been done in the past.

MR. JOHNSON: That was what he said in 1905.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member never put that argument before anyone.

MR. JOHNSON: The Attorney General must have read his (Mr. Johnson's) speech.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the hon. member could turn up in his speeches anything half so sensible as that, he would then have reason to congratulate himself. If this money was necessary in order to save the work that had been done, and if there was no money available to carry on the work from revenue, and if the work was not carried on immediately we sacrificed what had already been carried out, would the hon. member refuse to allow the work to be constructed out of loan? He did not pretend to be aware of the locality, or to tell the Committee what class of country the fence passed through. Those who were in a position to do that took the responsibility of saying that this work should be carried on. He did not put himself forward as any authority to pronounce an opinion, but accepted the opinion of those who did know something about it. If this district through which the fence was going was a settled district, capable of a betterment tax being raised, then he did not say he would not support a proposal for betterment, whereby a fair proportion of the cost of the erection of the fence should be placed on the land that derived benefit from the work. No matter how much members might indulge with a great deal of pleasure in doing everything they could and using every opportunity that came to their hands for the purpose of hurting him (the Attorney General) or others on the Treasury bench, we must recognise it was part of the duty of the Opposition to throw stones, and if they could not get their hand on a stone they threw dirt, which was generally what the Government got from the Opposition. If this work was not carried out, would the total expenditure to date be placed in danger? And if the revenue could not furnish funds to carry on the work, then he asked members to take a sensible view, and allow it to be completed from loan money rather than endanger the whole scheme of the rabbit-proof fence.

MR. JOHNSON: It was not desirable to press the amendment to a division, but if it were pressed he could not vote for it. The Attorney General had proved that the contention, used at Kalgoorlie

at the last election, was wrong, and the criticism of the Rason Government justified; therefore we had found him guilty of these two charges. Personally he would let the Attorney General off with a caution by voting against the amendment, but it was to be hoped the Attorney General would be more careful in the future in giving pledges to electors.

MR. UNDERWOOD: There was no immediate danger of the rabbits coming in at the top end of the fence near Congdon; the rabbits had not got so far north as that. If there was any desire on the part of the Government to postpone the continuation of the fence until they could raise sufficient revenue to do so, he (Mr. Underwood) said that the fence should be built out of revenue; but he would remind the Government that there was no danger at the present time of the rabbits coming in at the top end of the fence. It was reported consistently in the Nor'-West that rabbits were inside the fence. He had heard it from what appeared to be very reliable authority. Men who had worked on the fence, and those who came along it, said that rabbits were inside, and the general opinion of men who had been on the fence was that this was a total waste of money.

MR. HOLMAN: At the present time rabbits were on both sides of the fence near Nannine. The Attorney General had laid stress on the fact that owing to the state of the finances, the Government were forced to continue this work from loan funds. The position was far worse when the Labour Government were in power, and that was one reason why the Labour Government carried on the work with loan moneys. Experts had said that the fence was absolutely required, and that was the reason why the Labour Government pushed it forward out of loan funds.

MR. STONE: The fence would not be effective, but now that it had been started it should be completed. The Government should gazette certain pest districts, and those persons who benefited from the rabbit-proof fence should have some say in the supervision of the fence and should contribute towards the interest and the maintenance of that fence. Four or five years ago, when at Nannine, he saw a cage with two rabbits in it, which

showed that rabbits were brought from a long distance to the place, as no rabbits were then in that locality.

MR. BUTCHER had listened with some interest to the debate during the last hour, and members had wandered somewhat from the subject. Only now had we come to the point at issue. It was surprising to find the representative of a pastoral district, like the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood), giving utterance to such an absurd statement as that the rabbit-proof fence was useless, in defiance of the facts relative to rabbit-proof fences in other parts. They had proved most useful in the Eastern States, and everybody must know that the only possible means of keeping rabbits out of a country was a rabbit-proof fence.

MR. SCADDAN: In what Eastern State had the rabbit-proof fence proved useful?

MR. BUTCHER: As the hon. member well knew, in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. As for rabbits being on both sides of the fence, hon. members on reading the reports would find that instances of this were utterly isolated. Moreover, during the last few dry months strenuous and successful efforts had been made to destroy the rabbit nests inside the fence by poisoning and trapping. The whole of the work connected with the fence was now in a most satisfactory condition. As to making the squatters pay for the work, he personally would be most happy to to pay his share towards it, if—(laughter)—the Government would adopt the same principle in connection with every other public work; but it was manifestly unjust that the cost of a rabbit-proof fence, constructed for the purpose of protecting an enormous area of country not in the hands of the so-called squatters, or only to a very limited extent, infinitely the greater portion being still in the hands of the Government, unoccupied, should be cast entirely on those pastoralists who were already heavily taxed, and had great difficulties to contend with. Why was not this betterment principle applied in the case of the Coolgardie water scheme, which represented a huge investment of Government money made with the sole object of supplying one particular industry and one particular community with water?

MEMBER: The goldfields paid the full interest.

MR. SCADDAN: How much had the hon. member (Mr. Butcher) paid towards the rabbit-proof fence?

MR. BUTCHER: As a taxpayer, he had paid his share. The arguments which had been used to-night were absurd, and represented mere wasting of the time of the House and turning everything into ridicule.

MR. HOLMAN: Would the Chairman ask the hon. member to withdraw the statement that the arguments used against the fence merely represented a wasting of the time of the House?

THE CHAIRMAN: That was merely an expression of opinion.

MR. BUTCHER: The country had been put to the enormous expense of constructing a fence to one point, and now, because it was almost impossible to complete the work out of revenue, it was proposed to allow the work to remain in abeyance until revenue funds were available. It would be a disgrace and a scandal and a sin to allow that gap in the fence to remain. He sincerely hoped the Government would not for an instant think of allowing the amendment to pass.

MR. UNDERWOOD: The remarks of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) were to be regarded as expert evidence. He (Mr. Underwood) had said that the fence was useless, because the rabbits were inside it, and he could see no use in fencing rabbits in. So far he had had only the word of the men working on the fence, but now his information was confirmed by the expert evidence of the member for Gascoyne. Therefore he was finally convinced that farther expenditure was absolutely useless. Knowing the ravages of rabbits, he would say that if it were possible to keep them out, Western Australia would be justified in spending millions of pounds to that end; but it was useless to construct a fence to keep rabbits in. Experience showed that if a few rabbits were inside, before long there would be millions inside. The member for Gascoyne had said he failed to see the justice of making a few squatters pay for the fence. The rabbits, however, would affect not only the squatters in the vicinity of the Oakover River and the surrounding districts where the fence was still to be

built, but, if they got through there, would certainly spread to other districts, and eventually over the whole of our agricultural and pastoral country. Therefore the squatters and agriculturists of every part of Western Australia should be equally liable to pay for the erection of the fence, provided it could be proved that the fence would keep the rabbits off that country.

MR. BUTCHER: Very well; finish the fence.

MR. UNDERWOOD: The contention of the member for Gascoyne regarding the Coolgardie Water Scheme had his support, and he thought the scheme would soon return interest on capital and sinking fund. If it did not do so next year, he would certainly favour the fixing of a higher rate for water. Perhaps this argument regarding the cost of the fence would not have been used if the squatters and land-owners had shown themselves willing to submit to taxation, but they had absolutely refused to accept any land tax. Moreover, large tracts of pastoral country were being held at rents considerably less than their value. We were not philanthropists to supply squatters with fences and roads and bridges gratis.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	8
Noes	...	...	...	23
Majority against				15

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Brobber
Mr. Bath	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Bolton	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Collier	Mr. Butcher
Mr. Horan	Mr. Davies
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Walker	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Heilmann (Teller).	Mr. Gordon
	Mr. Hayward
	Mr. Holman
	Mr. Keenan
	Mr. McLarty
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. S. F. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Troy
	Mr. Veryard
	Mr. Ware
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. P. Wilson
	Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Roads and Bridges, £6,040 ;
recoup £9,360 :

Item—Main Roads, and Roads and
Bridges in Agricultural Districts, £6,040 ;
recoup, £9,360 :

MR. BATH wished to inform the
Treasurer that he (Mr. Bath) had no
hand in passing this vote last year. We
had an amount of £6,040 new expendi-
ture, which he proposed to move should
be struck out.

THE PREMIER: That was the balance
on the 1st July.

MR. BATH: There was no justification
for the inclusion of this item in the loan
schedule. By no stretch of the imagina-
tion could it be regarded as reproduc-
tive. He predicted that if this policy
were pursued it would not be long before
we were in the same position as Victoria
and other States, which, through their
attitude in regard to loan expenditure
on roads and bridges and other non-
reproductive works landed themselves in
difficulties. He hoped that members who
believed in preserving honest financial
methods so far as loan expenditure was
concerned would agree with him in
voting to strike the item out. He moved
an amendment—

That the item be omitted.

THE TREASURER: This was an item
which was passed on last year's Esti-
mates. We had expended at the end of
the financial year £9,360, and the lia-
bilities at the end of the year were
£3,882, so that we really expended nearly
the whole of the money. The amount to
be voted this year as new expenditure
was £6,040, which included liabilities of
£3,882, and made the total £15,400.
The whole of the money here had been
expended on these roads, and if the work
was not completed it was drawing near
completion. Surely the Committee would
not strike out an item of this description,
seeing that last year the works were
authorised.

MR. WALKER had understood from
the Minister that there was to be some-
thing for the North-East Coolgardie
Roads Board.

THE PREMIER: There was an "etcetera."

MR. WALKER: It was all Busselton.
We were getting into a narrow groove; we
could not get out of our cave. If we
were going to waste the time of the Com-

mittee and the country in beautifying
and adorning the hon. member's con-
stituency out of loan money, we should
be justified in excluding this amount
altogether until fair play could be ob-
tained for all the roads in the State. We
had cut down our grants to munici-
palities and roads boards so that they
could not get anything from the Govern-
ment, and yet we were voting these
special grants to the hon. member's con-
stituency. He felt inclined to support
the amendment.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS
hoped the hon. member would reconsider
his position. As a matter of fact this
vote was approved by the Committee last
year.

MR. BATH wanted to reconsider the
imposition.

THE MINISTER: These works with
the exception of £400 were authorised
last year and were practically completed.
There were practically no new roads and
bridges put down for this year to be con-
structed out of loan.

MR. HOLMAN: Time after time when
discussing the Estimates he had referred
to the amount spent in the cave district.
We did not know the sum spent there.
We saw an item year by year throughout
the whole of the Estimates, and now it
was introduced into the Loan Estimates.

THE TREASURER: It was not a new
item.

MR. HOLMAN: We were asked to
vote this amount of money without
knowing where it was going to. These
roads were constructed not in the agri-
cultural districts but going to the caves.

THE TREASURER: There was one in
the North-West.

MR. HOLMAN: There might be.
Why was not some explanation given?

THE TREASURER: Full particulars were
given last year.

MR. HOLMAN: Last year very little
information was given. Unless some
more satisfactory information was forth-
coming he intended to vote against the
item. He did not believe in the principle
of constructing roads and bridges out of
loan funds.

THE TREASURER: We must pay our
debts.

MR. HOLMAN: Where had this money
been spent? Various amounts had been
spent on the different roads, especially the

Busselton, Yallingup, and Wanneroo roads.

MR. STONE: There was a sum of £10,000 on the railway vote for a bridge in town. There seemed to be large amounts for Perth and Fremantle—[MEMBER: Not Fremantle]—whilst people in outlying districts had to go through sand and mud, and had to make their own roads. The Perth Council should be called upon to pay part of this £10,000, which would be expended for the benefit of the citizens and would increase the value of the assets.

MR. WALKER: The Minister said these works must be completed, as money had been spent on them. Quite recently the Min^{rs} Department undertook to make two roads in the Kanowna electorate; but after certain expenditure not another pound could be obtained. These were as important as any roads in the Busselton district. Roads boards were now shorn of their powers; yet the Government would not come to the rescue, though we were now voting more money than was needed to meet liabilities.

THE TREASURER: No. The £400 represented an under-estimate.

MR. WALKER: Unauthorised expenditure?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Last year £15,000 was voted for certain works, that being an approximate estimate of their cost. At the end of the financial year £9,360 worth was completed, and we were committed to £3,882 worth which were under way. At the commencement of the new year the balance of the £15,000 was expended, plus £400 more than had been provided; and the £6,040 shown as new expenditure was simply to pay off the liabilities existing on the 30th June. In addition to roads the vote included ten bridges at Marbellup, Carpachang, Popanying, Avon River, Mt. Kokeby, Dudinyillup and other places. We were not initiating any new loan expenditure, but simply completing last year's authorisations. The cost of roads and bridges could not be exactly estimated; therefore it was useless to strike out the £400.

MR. HOLMAN: What amount was spent on the Busselton-Yallingup road?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The particulars were not at the moment available.

MR. HOLMAN: Over £2,000 was spent on one road; and the contract price for the Busselton-Yallingup road was £1,700.

MR. SCADDAN: It was easy to assert that last year's vote had been exceeded by £400; but no information was given as to the roads constructed.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS did not accept the hon. member as an instructor.

MR. SCADDAN: No one could instruct the Minister. No information on this point was given last year. The Minister now said there were ten bridges, but the schedule showed only seven, together with three roads and a number of "etceteras." Was "etcetera" in the Treasurer's constituency? It was like "sundries" in a cricket score. Before passing unauthorised expenditure we should have particulars, otherwise roads never authorised could be made. He moved an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £400.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	12
Noes	...	...	...	17

Majority against ... 5

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Bath	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Bolton	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Collier	Mr. Davies
Mr. Holman	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Horan	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Troy	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Walker	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Ware	Mr. Price
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Veryard
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

MR. HOLMAN: Would the Minister supply during this session the information asked for, showing the roads constructed and the amount spent on each?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly, if the hon. member would call on him.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Public Buildings, £84,700; re-coup, £49,711:

MR. BATH, for the reasons advanced on "Roads and Bridges," objected to the new expenditure on public buildings.

The policy of the party to which the present Ministry belonged had been one of opposition to the construction of public buildings out of loan moneys, and the records showed that from the establishment of Responsible Government until last year our escutcheon was unsullied in this respect.

THE PREMIER: Who said so?

MR. BATH: The Statistical Register.

THE TREASURER: A sum of £365,000 was spent in one year.

MR. BATH: That was before Responsible Government. Returns in the *Monthly Abstract* and provided by the Treasurer's Department showed that the last amount expended from Loan Funds on public buildings was in 1898, but the sum then was only £2,633. In 1897 no loan moneys were spent on buildings, and in 1896 only £59. The total amount expended from Loan Funds on buildings between 1882 and 1906 was £67,124.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member said that none had been spent.

MR. BATH admitted having been in error in saying that none had been spent since 1890: but at least from 1898 until last year there was no expenditure on public buildings from Loan Funds. The obnoxious practice was introduced last year, when the Opposition protested against a system that was calculated to damage the prestige of Western Australia in commercial circles. The principle was vicious, and should be objected to by every member who desired to see the reputation of Western Australia maintained. The extra expenditure was £64,411. He moved an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £65,000.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member's party countenanced municipal expenditure of this character. If we had no provision for sinking fund it would be a dangerous and obnoxious practice; but when it was considered that we paid nearly a quarter of a million into a sinking fund each year, surely no great exception could be taken to providing such absolutely necessary works as those described in the schedule out of loan at a time when the other requirements of the State more than consumed our revenue.

MR. WALKER: How was the interest on these buildings to be met?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If we paid a quarter of a million a year into a sinking fund to redeem the debts owing on reproductive works, and if we spent £84,000 on buildings, the payment for which would be spread over 40 years—and the buildings would certainly last out a deal longer than that period—by no stretch of imagination could we be said to be going to the bad with regard to our indebtedness. It was a practice that should be avoided if possible; but rather than that our children should go without schools, or that Kalgoorlie should go without abattoirs, or that our insane should be kept in an asylum of such antiquated style as the present building, he would be prepared to borrow, if necessary at a heavy rate of interest, for these works. It was sometimes difficult to draw the line between reproductive and unproductive works. He very much doubted whether, if we could provide facilities for curing the insane and for educational facilities, they would not be in one sense reproductive works, though they were not in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Members should recognise the position the Government was placed in, and the large sum paid annually into the sinking fund, and in view of the smallness of the vote should pass it.

MR. WALKER: The point at issue was whether we were to depart from a principle? The statement of the Minister for Works was a revelation, following on his recent statement that our revenue now barely paid the working expenses of our civil service; and that revenue was on the decrease.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Increased taxation was contemplated.

MR. WALKER: And we were going to spend in Busselton all that would be got from this taxation.

THE TREASURER: What about the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway?

MR. BATH: That could not be compared with public buildings.

MR. WALKER: The difference was that one had a chance of becoming reproductive, the other work had not.

THE TREASURER: But the hon. member said all the money raised was to be spent in Busselton.

MR. WALKER: The Estimates showed that £15,000 was voted in one lump for Busselton to-night. He was pleased

that abattoirs were to be supplied for Kalgoorlie. That work would be reproductive and in that respect might be justified; but public buildings generally, such as gaols and lunatic asylums, could not be justly considered chargeable to loan funds. That was the protest being made by the Opposition—not against the items which were heterogeneously classified, reproductive and unproductive works being thrown together and not clearly defined as they should be. In supporting the amendment he was voting to assert the principle of only spending loan moneys on works that were distinctly reproductive and compelling payment for all other works out of revenue. That principle had been departed from and should be returned to at the earliest possible moment.

THE TREASURER: This was a principle the member for Kanowna had voted in favour of often in New South Wales. The argument in favour of the principle raised by the hon. member was not as sound as he wished members to believe. If we took into consideration directly or indirectly reproductive works, we must as a Parliament and a Government satisfy the needs of our people. Would anyone say that the additions to the Government Printing Office were not a fair item to pay for out of loan moneys? Take the abattoirs on the goldfields, again that was a directly reproductive work. Take the Fremantle prison, it was indirectly reproductive and directly to some extent. Take the lunatic asylum, was not that of benefit to the health of the whole community by having people removed to a place where they could have medical treatment? Take the schools, was not the provision of educational facilities for our children an indirectly reproductive public work?

MR. WALKER: Did not that show there was no work which was not reproductive.

THE TREASURER: There were very few works indeed which were not really reproductive. If there was a work of a temporary nature that could not possibly last for more than 20 or 30 years, then he would say the Government ought to construct that work out of revenue, unless it were directly reproductive. If the Government were constructing works which would last for 40 years, and some

of them for perhaps 200 years, was it fair that we should take from the pockets of the present generation the whole of the cost of those buildings? If the present generation were taxed to pay the interest and sinking fund, so that the amount would be redeemed within a reasonable time, say 40 years, was that not a fair burden to place on the present generation? Posterity would be very much better off 100 years hence than the present generation. Were we justified in refusing the necessities of the people because we had not the revenue to spend?

MR. BATH: No; get the revenue.

THE TREASURER: We had tried, and the other Chamber had thrown our measure out, and would not allow us to get the revenue. In the meantime we did not intend to starve our people. It was only a question as to how far we should go. He was agreeable to the contention that we should be cautious and not go too far; it was all a question of how far we could safely borrow in comparison with the population and the revenue. When we found we were going beyond the limits of repayment, as far as the revenue was concerned, by way of sinking fund and the payment of interest, then it was time to stop, but we had not reached that period yet. We should be doing an injustice to the people to deprive them of necessary works and buildings, because at the present time some members thought in the dim future we should override the constable.

MR. BATH: The Treasurer who had just spoken was altogether a different individual from the Treasurer who spoke at the conference of State legislators. Then it was the boast of the Treasurer over the Treasurers of the other States that whilst they had spent their money on nonproductive works, in Western Australia we had exercised more caution, and had expended our money on reproductive works, and were consequently in a better position. If the Treasurer had to strike a tax for each work, he would soon be in a position of reaching the limit of the taxable condition of the people. In the case of a State, so long as borrowed money was invested in reproductive works, the increased burden of interest was counterbalanced by increased revenue. It was different, however, when borrowed money was spent in unproduc-

tive works, as in the case of Victoria, which laid the last straw on the camel's back. We should never embark on such a policy : far better refrain now than have to confess a few years later that we had made a grievous mistake. It would not be many years before the people of this State would have to pay for the sins which the Ministry had been committing.

MR. T. L. BROWN could not entirely agree with the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the whole of the items enumerated under this head, and therefore he must vote against the member for Brown Hill. He was opposed to the excision of the item for education, having during his election campaigns fought strongly for the principle of free education and for all possible assistance towards education. He was, however, strongly opposed to the item of £5,000 for the Perth Art Gallery.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	6
Noes	...	...	...	17

Majority against ... 11

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Bath	Mr. Angwin
Mr. Holman	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Hudson	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Walker	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Ware	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Collier (Teller).	Mr. Davies
	Mr. Ewing
	Mr. Gordon
	Mr. Gregory
	Mr. Hayward
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

MR. T. L. BROWN moved an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £5,000.

This sum represented the amount proposed to be granted to the Perth Art Gallery. He conscientiously and fearlessly contended that the item could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as a reproductive work, being on the contrary a luxury pure and simple.

THE TREASURER: The Art Gallery was educational.

MR. T. L. BROWN: Back country people could not participate in the

privilege of visiting the gallery. Where the money was put in one small place as it would be in the art gallery the whole of the inhabitants of the State could not participate in it with advantage to themselves, and a great number of the inhabitants of the State would never have an opportunity of visiting the art gallery at all.

MR. ANGWIN noticed that there was a sum of £6,000 for the Kalgoorlie abattoirs.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question had been carried.

MR. ANGWIN: Before the vote was carried he was on his feet.

MR. JOHNSON: The hon. member was distinctly on his feet before the Chairman commenced to put the vote, and sat down because the Chairman was on his feet and speaking.

THE CHAIRMAN was quite aware of that. The question then was reducing the vote by £5,000. If the hon. member desired to move a farther amendment he could do so.

MR. ANGWIN was going to speak to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The sum could not be allocated to any particular item. All the hon. member could do was to reduce the vote by a certain sum. It must be less than £5,000.

MR. ANGWIN was going to support the amendment for a certain reason, when the Chairman would not give him an opportunity to speak.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member desired to speak he could do so.

MR. ANGWIN was supporting a reduction of the vote because whilst a sum was provided for abattoirs at Kalgoorlie an amount had not been placed on these Estimates in relation to abattoirs at Fremantle. Plans and tenders were called for some two years ago in regard to abattoirs to be constructed at Fremantle, and the matter was intended to be held over only until the appointment of a superintendent.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. HOLMAN entered his protest against this amount appearing on the Loan Estimates. It was a grave mistake for the Government to depart from the old principles by constructing public buildings from loan funds. The late

Government were condemned when in power.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was out of order.

MR. HOLMAN: Could he not give his reasons for voting against the vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: It had been decided the vote should not be reduced.

MR. HOLMAN intended to vote against the whole vote; was not that in order?

THE CHAIRMAN did not think it was at this stage.

MR. HOLMAN: When would it be in order?

THE CHAIRMAN: The Committee had dealt with the vote by proposing two reductions, and the only thing in order was to move an amendment to reduce by a lesser amount.

MR. BATH: Were we not in order in voting against the whole vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: In voting, certainly.

MR. BATH: The hon. member desired to give his reasons for voting against it. Until the vote was decided the hon. member was quite in order in stating his reasons.

THE CHAIRMAN ruled that the hon. member was not in order in discussing it at this stage.

MR. BATH: It was repression.

MR. DAGLISH moved an amendment—

That the vote be reduced by £1,000.

MR. HOLMAN regretted having to speak on this question at the present time. He maintained that at any stage he would be in order whilst desiring to have the vote reduced.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did the hon. member dispute the ruling of the Chair?

MR. HOLMAN: It was useless to dispute the ruling of the Chair. He had no desire to; he had stated that before. He regretted that he was interrupted so often when speaking. He was interrupted before he had finished a sentence. He was interrupted by the Chair time after time. He regretted that we were forced to go into the construction of public buildings from loan funds. He hoped the time was not far distant when the finances would be in such a position that we should go back to the old system.

MR. STONE: These buildings would earn a certain amount of rent, which would be more than equivalent to the interest. The first loan the Government

of this State obtained was to build roads and bridges, and the £50,000 thus spent had been of more use than any other £50,000 expended.

MR. BATH: We were taxed to-day to pay for that.

MR. JOHNSON desired very briefly to enter his protest against the construction of asylums, schools, old men's depots, etc., out of loan funds. This was a departure absolutely taken by the present Government, and was the most retrogressive step made in Australian politics. At the last general election we had the spectacle of the Government going to the country and condemning the Labour Government for the fact that it had a deficiency. Being successful in convincing the people that the deficiency was owing to the want of capacity on the part of the Labour Government and that others could overcome the difficulty, they came back to Parliament, and they handed over to revenue moneys out of loan funds for the very work which the Labour Government had constructed from revenue. In other words, when the Rason Government took office, the Labour Government had spent some money on the asylum, from which expenditure a deficit resulted. The Rason Government took from loan the amount of that expenditure, and paid it into revenue. By misrepresentation the Government obtained office, and immediately did what they had condemned in their predecessors. The only instance in which the Labour Government spent loan money on nonproductive works was the rabbit-proof fence; and that expenditure was rendered necessary by the bungling of the James Government, which cost the country £90,000, and if the present Government continued bungling, they would cost the country hundreds of thousands. The people could not now retaliate on the Government, for there were not sufficient by-elections. We must wait for the general election, when this would be one of the main reasons for condemning the Government.

MR. DAGLISH would not discuss the merits, if discoverable, of the Government, but would point out that the Committee, if they did not pass the amendment, were rushing into loan expenditure that the country could not stand.

THE TREASURER: Would a thousand pounds save the country?

MR. DAGLISH: If the Treasurer did not know that any economy was worth making, he was unfit for his position. This expenditure of £1,332,000 would involve an interest charge of £150,000 a year to be provided from revenue. Apart from that we had now to provide sinking fund and interest on loans at, say, 4 per cent., a reasonable estimate. On the 30th June last we had a deficit of £116,000, plus a deficit of £3,000 estimated by the Treasurer, plus an additional £60,000 to be added because the Treasurer had failed to pass his Land Tax Bills. At the end of the present financial year we should therefore have a deficit of £179,000. These were the figures submitted by the Treasurer with his Estimates. Yet the Treasurer proposed within two or three years, in two years if he could, to spend three million pounds, which would represent a farther annual charge of £150,000. The Government proposed to meet a revenue deficit by increasing loan expenditure, thus making additional charges on that revenue. They proposed to restore confidence by increasing the burden on the taxpayer. This was not an opportune time to swell loan expenditure. For the past four years the policy was to exercise caution in that matter. That caution was first recommended, and was amply justified, by Mr. Gardiner, and practised by the Labour Government, who earned much unpopularity by not seeking public favour by expenditure from loan which, it was alleged, would find work for their supporters. The policy adopted by the Rason Government, evidenced by the fact that they spent only £537,558 from loans, was abandoned by this Government. The present Government sought to restore prosperity by increasing our liabilities in the way of interest and sinking fund. It was an unsound policy, in view of the possibility of the falling revenue, the abrogation of the bookkeeping clauses by the Commonwealth Parliament and the abolition of the Braddon Clause, so that the country must look carefully into any increase in interest and sinking fund charges. It was absolutely essential to carefully reduce all borrowing to an absolute minimum, in order to keep down the charges for sinking fund and interest. Instead of that the Government were, without supplying any justification

for it, enormously swelling the annual charges for interest and sinking fund. Their policy in that respect would bring about a financial crisis in succeeding years. A large portion of the people, it was true, were anxious that the Government should launch out into liberal expenditure of loan moneys. That might create fictitious prosperity in the immediate present, but afterwards the people would have to foot the bill. We were now suffering to a large degree from the fact that heavy loans had been incurred in the past. Having had to attend a meeting in his electorate to-night, he regretted not having been here earlier to discuss the items and enter his protest against this expenditure of loan moneys on public buildings. The amendment he moved would give the Committee an opportunity to protest.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. HOLMAN: Were members in order in voting "no" when the vote was put, and thus voting out the vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HOLMAN: A different ruling was given previously.

THE CHAIRMAN: The previous ruling was that the hon. member was not in order in speaking. The hon. member could vote as he pleased.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Loan Estimates for the year.

Resolutions reported; the report adopted.

GOOMALLING RAILWAY, AN INSPECTION.

THE PREMIER: For the information of members, I would like to intimate that we propose to make a tour of inspection of the Goomalling railway line on Monday next, leaving Perth at 9 o'clock and returning about 6 o'clock in the evening.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:31 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.