

The present secretary worked till all hours of the night, and well earned his salary. Each of the preceding Premiers (Mr. Rason and Mr. Daglish) left a minute as to the good work done by the present secretary, and affirmed that his salary was insufficient. He (the Premier), being also Minister for Lands, found his work very heavy; and it was greatly increased by the additional correspondence from the Federal departments and from the Public Service Commissioner, papers relating to appointments made by the latter passing through the Premier's office. The time of both clerk and secretary was fully occupied, and probably no other officers in the service worked longer hours.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

STOCK ROUTE, EXPLORATION REPORT.

GOLDFIELDS TO KIMBERLEY.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I have a rather interesting telegram I would like to read to members. It is from Mr. Canning, who was appointed by the Government to take charge of an exploring party from Lake Way to Sturt Creek. Mr. Canning left last May, and he telegraphs to-day from Hall's Creek, Kimberley, as follows:—

Arrived Day Camp, Flora Valley; got through without loss camels or horses. Can get stock route, well watered, fair feed, very little stony country; many wells giving good supply, seven to ten feet. Water rising four feet from surface. Anticipate wells 20 feet will give ample supply good mob of cattle. Shall have to bore in places going back at either end. Water assured now between Auld Lake and 60 miles Godfrey's Tank about every 10 miles. No doubt get sufficient over remaining portion; deeper towards Wiluna. Sandhills avoided where possible; long stretches without any; other places had short distances, but generally broken and low. Party well. Will have to wait here until summer rains. Camels could not face sand without rain and spell.

ADJOURNMENT OF HOUSE (ROYAL SHOW).

The PREMIER moved—

That the House at its rising do adjourn till 7.30 p.m. to-morrow.

MR. TAYLOR: The motion was to enable members to attend the Royal Agricultural Show, to see the stock and agricultural products of the country. Members after spending a day at the show would not be much inclined for work in the evening. Better adjourn till 4.30 on Thursday.

The PREMIER was only following the usual custom. If the Opposition were willing to forego one private member's night, he hoped they would not subsequently accuse the Government of striking notices off the paper at the last moment. He would amend the motion as desired.

Motion as altered put and passed.

The House adjourned accordingly at 10.45 o'clock, until the next Thursday afternoon.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 1st November, 1906.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—TELEPHONE BOOK.

MR. BOLTON (for Mr. Johnson) asked the Premier: Will he ascertain from the proper authorities—1, What is the quarterly cost of printing the W.A. Telephone Book? 2, Amount paid in Eastern States per page for this book? 3, Amount paid per page in W.A. for supplementary lists?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, The book is not printed quarterly. Present issue cost £82, printed in Adelaide, inclusive of £6 first instalment on the purchase of a special indexing machine imported for the purpose. 2, '046 of penny per page for 3,012 copies. 3, '068 of penny per page for 4,500 copies. The cost would have been about £20 less had not a great amount of new matter, required to be inserted when the proof was returned to Adelaide, necessitated an entire rearrangement of the book.

QUESTION—CAMELS IMPORTATION.

MR. HOLMAN asked the Premier: 1, Has application been made for permission to import 500 camels and 30 camel drivers (or any portion of same) into this State? 2, If so, (a) by whom, (b) and from what place? 3, Has permission been granted? 4, If not is it the intention of the Government to grant such permission?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, (a) H. Mahomet, A. Nathan, and the Dastageers Syndicate per O. D. Sookhia; (b) Arabia, India; not stated. 3, As the importation of camels is allowed, subject to the regulations under the Stock Act, duly referred to in the Order in Council published in the *Government Gazette* of 22nd June, 1906, no specific permission is required or has been given. The permission to import drivers is a Commonwealth matter. 4, Answered by No. 3.

REPORT—BOILER EXPLOSION INQUIRY.

MR. BARNETT brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquiry into the boiler explosion at the Sons of Gwalia mine.

Report received and ordered to be printed.

REPORT—FISHING INDUSTRY INQUIRY.

MR. DAGLISH brought up the report of the joint committee appointed to inquire into the fishing industry.

Report received, ordered to be printed, and to be considered on the 7th November.

BILL—RACECOURSE LICENSING.

Introduced by the PREMIER (for the Attorney General), and read a first time.

BILL—PERTH TOWN HALL (SITE).

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.

Amendment (one) suggested by the Legislative Council now considered in Committee; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair, the PREMIER in charge of the Bill.

Clause 4—Strike out the words "or any other land approved by referendum of the ratepayers of the municipality of Perth," in lines 3 and 4.

THE PREMIER: In Clause 4, after considerable discussion in this House it was decided to give effect to the wish expressed by members for the insertion of an amendment allowing a certain choice as to the land on which the town hall should be erected. The City Council had since written to him asking that the clause should be allowed to stand as originally printed, and stating that they were not prepared to accept the amendment as it appeared when the Bill left the Assembly. Accordingly, when it reached the Upper House the words which it was agreed should be added were there struck out, and the Bill now stood as it was when originally introduced into the Assembly. Under these circumstances, the Perth Council being second parties to the agreement, he moved—

That the Council's suggested amendment be agreed to.

MR. DAGLISH: If the Legislative Council's suggested amendment were now adopted, it would only be postponing the settlement of the question. Had the Government chosen to take the course he suggested in Committee and put a capital value on the present town hall site, they would have got over the whole trouble. The amendment passed in the Assembly was simply made to do the same thing in a somewhat more clumsy and inefficient fashion; but even so, it was better than the Bill as first printed. It gave the council of Perth an opportunity for taking the opinion of the ratepayers on more than the Irwin Street site. A large number of ratepayers would rather have some other site than the Irwin Street site. A certain proportion of them thought the town hall should go farther

westward, while others thought it should go farther northward from the present site, and those ratepayers were both alike opposed to the site in Irwin Street. It was only reasonable, if the Government desired this question to be settled, that some opportunity should be given to those ratepayers to demand from the council a right to express their opinion by ballot on a certain number of sites. If by means of a referendum the majority of the ratepayers expressed a desire to have a northern site or a western site instead of the Irwin Street site, the question of price could be adjusted as between the council on the one hand and the Government on the other. If the ratepayers did not take any action, assuming this Bill to be passed with the amendment already inserted by this Committee, of course the referendum would be purely on the one site—the exchange of one site for another. The Premier had told us his only reason for moving that the Council's amendment be agreed to was that the amendment was not in the original Bill, and the Perth Council suggested that it should be deleted. Reading the communications between the Perth Council and the Government, there did seem to be a certain amount of divergence in the City Council itself on the question of sites. He knew personally there was much divergence of opinion on the part of the ratepayers of Perth, and that very many wanted the site to go westward. Probably those who wanted it to go westward would be more likely to speak to him on the subject than would those who wanted it either in Irwin Street or in some other direction, but they were numerous and influential enough as far as their votes went to justify some consideration being given to their claims. The fact that the amendment was not originally in the Bill and that the Perth Council had suggested it should be cut out was not in itself a conclusive justification for asking this Committee to go back on a proposition carried at the instance of the Premier himself. He hoped the Premier would not insist in moving that the amendment of the Council be adopted, but if so, he (Mr. Daglish) would be prepared to vote against him.

Mr. BREBBER: When the measure was before this House, a letter from the City Council said they required the

amendment; but at the last meeting of the council there was a misunderstanding, and a letter had now been sent in terms directly contradictory to the communication sent previously. The City Council and the citizens of Perth wished the Government to offer £22,000 and the Irwin Street site for the town hall, without any condition whatever; but when the Government imposed a condition that the council should build a town hall on the Irwin Street site, that was a different matter. The condition that the town hall should be built on the Irwin Street site would only suit a small section of the citizens, and the majority being discontented with that site would vote against the arrangements of the Government. The House ought to permit of a fair "deal" between the citizens and Parliament, allowing the citizens to choose a site. The Legislative Council's amendment practically meant that the agreement with the corporation could not be carried out; for the citizens would not accept the suggestion that the new town hall should be built on the Irwin Street site.

Mr. H. BROWN supported the Council's amendment. The Perth Council were not parties to the amendment passed in this House. An agreement was arrived at that the Government should buy the present town hall site for £22,000 and the vacant block in Irwin Street, which if the amendment passed the City Council would have to sell in order to build the town hall on any other site which the citizens might select. Submit to the ratepayers a clear issue as to whether they would ratify the agreement made between the corporation and the Government. The agreement had the unanimous support of the City Council, including the member for North Perth (Mr. Brebber).

Mr. TAYLOR opposed the Council's amendment. The citizens should be free to select a site. A large number of them objected to the Irwin Street site, though they might accept that site and £22,000 for the present town hall site. If the Legislative Council's amendment were agreed to, a majority of the ratepayers would probably disapprove of building on the Irwin Street site, and therefore would be deprived of an opportunity of locating their town hall.

MR. H. BROWN: Surely there must be two parties to an agreement. It was unfair for the House to force the corporation into an agreement never asked for. The Bill as it stood ratified the agreement already arrived at. The correspondence showed a unanimous desire that the ratepayers should have an opportunity of deciding whether the town hall should be built on the Irwin Street site.

MR. BREBBER: How could the last speaker maintain that the Government were forcing an agreement on the City Council when by negating the amendment of another place we were really giving the citizens a free hand, allowing them to fix the site of the new town hall? That was an unfair condition to attach. We should leave the citizens of Perth a free hand to say whether they would take so much for the town hall, and where it should be built. We should not tie their hands to the Irwin Street site.

MR. HOLMAN: By rejecting the Legislative Council's amendment, we would give the citizens of Perth more latitude in deciding the site for the town hall. It would be unwise to pass the measure without the amendment that had been inserted in the Bill by the Assembly. We should not compel the citizens of Perth to have their town hall in one particular spot.

MR. VERYARD: The mayor and councillors of Perth, as representatives of the citizens of Perth, had asked the Government to sanction the deletion of the amendment effected by the Assembly, and if the mayor and councillors of Perth were prepared to accept that responsibility, we should not take it from them. The Bill without the amendment provided a clear-cut issue as to whether the ratepayers would accept the agreement entered into by the Perth City Council and the Government. If the ratepayers would not accept that agreement, then the mayor and councillors would have an opportunity later on of reopening the issue by asking for another site or for a lump sum for the town hall with permission to build where they chose.

MR. TAYLOR: Why not allow them that right now?

MR. H. BROWN: Because they did not wish it.

THE PREMIER: The amendment could not be pressed with the vigour he would like, because he had come to the conclusion that the City Council were rather fickle in regard to the matter. In the first place, the Bill had been drawn up at their instigation and with their approval. Afterwards it was suggested that some little latitude should be given in selecting the site, and the amendment was inserted in the Assembly. Subsequently, the council wrote desiring the amendment to be deleted in the Legislative Council, and that was done. As the Perth Council were the second party to the agreement and as the Bill had really been brought down at their instigation, he considered it his duty to endeavour to give effect to their suggestion; but it was open to the Committee to decide whether the Legislative Council's suggested amendment should be agreed to or not.

MR. DAGLISH: While the City Council was one party to the agreement, this Committee was the other party, and surely if there was to be an agreement, this Committee representing the people of the State had as much right to lay down and vary the terms of the agreement as the other party to it. If this Committee was simply to register a decision come to between the City Council and the Government, we would not need a Bill like this. It was absurd for members to argue that the whole question was to be settled by the City Council. This question concerned the whole of the people of the State, who had as much right to consideration as even the City Council. More than that, the Perth City Council was not the other party to the agreement. This was a contract entered into by the State, through its representatives in Parliament assembled, and the ratepayers of Perth; and seeing that a referendum was to be taken of the ratepayers of Perth, the City Council was merely an intermediary expressing the opinion of the ratepayers. The whole question was whether that opinion was expressed in this Bill. Even if the ratepayers of Perth desired to have the town hall built on the Irwin Street site, what harm would there be in retaining the Assembly's amendment in the Bill? There could be no harm in giving a wider choice, because it could not affect the result one way or the

other, if the ratepayers, by a majority, insisted on the Irwin street site. Why this desire to prevent the ratepayers of Perth from having a voice at all in the matter? Why this distrust, this doubt as to whether the Perth City Council represented the ratepayers or not? After all, that was the real issue. The member for Perth was arguing that if this Bill were varied and the ratepayers had a chance, they would upset the decision of the council. If the ratepayers were going to confirm the arrangement, there could be no fear of allowing them the opportunity.

MR. H. BROWN: There was no fear of the ratepayers accepting this agreement, because it was a bad bargain.

MR. DAGLISH: We should let the ratepayers of Perth say that themselves.

MR. H. BROWN: That was the object.

MR. DAGLISH: No; the hon. member did not desire the ratepayers to have any voice whatever. He desired to force the ratepayers of Perth to say whether the council did right or wrong. That would be inconclusive; things would remain as they were, and it would be necessary to begin things entirely anew. On the other hand, if the ratepayers had an opportunity of saying that they desired to surrender the town hall site because they recognised that it was unsuitable, but that they did not recognise that the Irwin Street site was the best site that could be obtained in lieu, they would have an opportunity of doing so by the clause as amended by the Assembly; but if the Legislative Council's amendment were agreed to they would not have that opportunity; they would merely say "yea" or "nay." Who was more likely to voice the views of the Perth City Council: the member for Perth (Mr. H. Brown), the member for Balkatta (Mr. Veryard), or the member for North Perth (Mr. Brebber)? No one could challenge that the member for North Perth was the spokesman to this Committee of the views of the Perth Council, and the hon. member had informed the Committee that the Legislative Council's amendment was suggested through a misunderstanding. We should give the ratepayers of Perth a chance of expressing their will. That was the object of the Bill. It was a Bill to take a referendum, not to make an exchange.

MR. H. BROWN: It was binding when it was taken.

MR. DAGLISH: Certainly; it would bind the Government to take over the present site; but what would be the use of a referendum if after it was taken it had no effect? The member for Perth would not go so far as to advocate that we should take a referendum out of mere curiosity, to know what the ratepayers of Perth thought about the matter. Members should realise that if the proposal for an exchange were rejected, it prevented the Government acquiring a site they desired to acquire, and which they should acquire; and that it also prevented the City Council from getting a suitable site on which to build a town hall. The member for Perth was anxious to prevent the citizens of Perth from having the opportunity of getting a good town hall site. [MR. H. BROWN: From making a bad bargain.] The hon. member wished to prevent the citizens of Perth expressing their will on what was a good site for the town hall. The hon. member was anxious to defeat the purpose of the Bill, but members should accept the views of the City Council as expressed by the member for North Perth.

MR. H. BROWN: Granted that the member for North Perth knew more about the wishes of the corporation, there was in the possession of the Premier a letter from the corporation objecting to the choice of sites.

MR. DAGLISH: The corporation requested it.

MR. H. BROWN: The corporation did not request any sites, only the original agreement.

MR. DAGLISH: Did the hon. member accuse the Premier of misleading the Committee?

MR. H. BROWN: No; but there was no representation on the files of the corporation asking for more than the Irwin Street site, and the Premier had in his possession a letter from the corporation objecting to the insertion of the amendment passed by the Assembly. If members of Parliament prepared an agreement, they would wish to be consulted before any alteration was made in the agreement. The member for Subiaco pointed out that the Perth Council represented the ratepayers; and if the amendment were to

be persisted in it should be sent back to the corporation, as the representatives of the ratepayers, for their concurrence. The Perth Council had in good faith entered into a certain agreement with the Premier, and should be consulted in regard to any variation of the terms of that agreement. It was seldom that he appealed to the House or to the Government to do anything for the city of Perth; but in this case he felt impelled to do so.

MR. TAYLOR was surprised at the attempt made by the member for Perth to convey the impression that both the Premier and the member for North Perth had tried to mislead the House in reference to the agreement. The Premier pointed out that a certain agreement had been arrived at between the Government and the council, but owing to the undecided attitude of the City Council themselves on the point, the Government had been less strenuous in urging that agreement upon another place than they might otherwise have been. The member for North Perth (Mr. Brebber), who was a city councillor, desired that the ratepayers should be given an opportunity of deciding the question as between the Government and the City Council by means of a referendum; and that hon. member's opinion on this matter deserved attention. It was unfair to tie the hands of the ratepayers in the manner suggested by the amendment, which meant that ratepayers must either accept the Irwin Street site and erect a town hall thereon or retain the present site. It would be fairer to afford the ratepayers of the city an opportunity of voting on the agreement without the additional condition that the town hall must be built at Irwin Street. Possibly the council might, by disposing of the Irwin Street site and adding the proceeds of the sale to the £22,000 proposed to be given in addition to the exchange of sites, be in a position to acquire by purchase another more suitable site and erect a town hall thereon without the necessity for a loan. Were the council to make it a condition of the transfer that the Government should use the present town hall site for any specified purpose, the Government would not be likely to accept the agreement; why then should not the ratepayers be given freedom of action in regard to the Irwin

Street site once it had become their property? Why should they be compelled by Act of Parliament to build a town hall on that site? The Committee should recognise the importance of the issue and should support those members who were in a position to afford the most valuable information on the point.

THE TREASURER: The mayor and councillors of Perth might be credited with knowing their own business best. This matter had been before the Perth Council for months, and the result of the negotiation with the Government, so far as he remembered the details, was that the Government should hand over the Irwin Street site plus £22,000 provided a town hall were erected upon that site. He understood from the mayor of Perth that the entire council were agreeable to the proposal and that the resolution had been carried practically unanimously. The Perth Council had evidently considered the suitability of the Irwin Street site before coming to a conclusion on the point whether to accept or reject the proposal put before them. The council, who were the representatives of the ratepayers, having dealt with the question, it seemed to him now that the intention was to relieve the council of its responsibility.

MR. DAGLISH: What was the object of the referendum proposal?

THE TREASURER: To decide whether the contract, or agreement, tentatively entered into between the Government and the council should be ratified.

MR. DAGLISH: To find out if the council represented the ratepayers?

THE TREASURER: No; to find out whether the ratepayers would endorse the agreement made by the council. It was useless the member for Subiaco attempting to drag a red-herring across the track. The council knew what they were doing when they entered into the agreement; and now that they had asked the Premier to pass the Bill in its present form, providing for a referendum on the Irwin Street site, Parliament should do so. He did not know why we should drag in words like these, which would practically necessitate a referendum upon three or four sites.

MR. DAGLISH: The Government dragged these words in.

THE TREASURER: The Government brought the amendment in because it was

suggested by the City Council, but now the council said: "No; we see it is not required; it would cause trouble, and we do not want it in." He could see the great difficulty of having to submit to a referendum three or four sites; it would take a long time to get an expression of opinion as to which site was the best, and if we had a battle for sites we should never get the town hall.

MR. TAYLOR: The Government wanted to compel the people to accept something.

THE TREASURER: No. The member for Mount Margaret and the member for Subiaco urged that the Legislative Council's amendment would practically force people to accept the Irwin Street site.

MR. DAGLISH: To accept or reject it.

THE TREASURER: The Legislative Council wished to put before the people the rejection or acceptance of a complete scheme. He believed the member for Perth wished these words to be left out of the Bill, so that the ratepayers would, as he thought, reject the whole thing and leave the town hall on its present site. The hon. member might be right or wrong. Surely it was not wrong to give power to have a referendum for the acceptance or rejection of this scheme. He supported the motion of the Premier.

MR. EWING was inclined to give the ratepayers the widest possible choice. In his opinion the present site had no equal, and the City Council would have no trouble in getting sufficient money to build a magnificent hall on it. We had to imagine what Perth would be in 30, 40 or 50 years, and if the site was not in the centre of the city great injustice would be done to the ratepayers and to coming generations. Alongside the present site we had Government land, which was being used for the Savings Bank, and there was no reason why arrangements should not be made to get a portion of that land. It was the duty of the corporation to look farther into the matter. He was inclined to agree with the amendment by the Upper House, and to embody in the matter the question whether the present site should be maintained or not. Let the people of Perth express an opinion whether they would have the new town hall on that

site and whether they would require farther land.

THE PREMIER: They could take a referendum without any Bill.

MR. EWING: The attitude taken up by another place to give the people the fullest choice in this matter was entirely right.

MR. BATH: The Legislative Council did not do that. They took away the right.

MR. EWING: The amendment was that there should be a referendum.

MR. BATH: No; the Legislative Council refused that. They struck out the amendment providing for a referendum.

MR. EWING: The amendment from another place would give the people the right to choose any site they liked. He would vote for giving the widest choice. He did not think the City Council were in touch with the ratepayers, if they thought of removing the town hall from its present site.

MR. BATH: The proposal of the Legislative Council was to take away a right of the citizens of Perth which was given to them in the Bill as sent from this House; the Bill then providing that the ratepayers should have a referendum on the question as to which was the most suitable site, whether the Irwin Street site, the present site, or any other site they could procure; but another place, in its wisdom or unwisdom, had suggested to take away the right. Members desired to insist on the amendment carried by this Committee, giving to the ratepayers of Perth the fullest possible right of choosing the best site. Surely we could rely on the good sense of the ratepayers, knowing the needs of the city, to select that site which would be most suitable.

MR. H. BROWN: In the opinion of the majority of the ratepayers there was ample room to build a town hall on the present site. The full consideration the Government were getting was not mentioned. The present site was valued by the Government valuer at £35,000.

THE PREMIER: The amount was £31,200.

MR. H. BROWN: If they used the present site, the corporation would also have the gift from the Government of the police court site, which was worth nearly

another £30,000, and that was the consideration the council were giving up.

MR. TAYLOR: That was not quite decided.

MR. H. BROWN: That was about £65,000, for the Irwin Street block worth £10,000 and £22,000. No wonder the corporation of Perth were getting the worst of the bargain. The change of site was only desired by a few who wanted a large hall for balls and that kind of thing, which very few mayors of Perth had been able to give. On the present site a hall almost as large as the Queen's Hall could be erected, with offices for the corporation in front of it. It would be far better for this Bill to go to the people with a clear-cut issue than to have the matter glossed over with a lot of other sites. If a number of sites were submitted, confusion would prevail.

THE PREMIER: The member for Perth misstated some of the values. The Perth police court site was valued at £22,300, and the offer of it was made on the condition that a town hall was built there. The council appointed a subcommittee to go into the question thoroughly, and they found that the land would be totally inadequate for a town hall worthy of the city. The City Council were getting £22,000 with the Irwin Street site, valued at £20,000 and not £10,000 as stated by the hon. member. This meant that they were getting equivalent to £42,000 for the Perth town hall site, valued at £31,200, also their right to the police court site, valued at £22,300, the total value being £53,500; but the City Council could only hold the latter site on condition that they built a town hall.

MR. BATH: Subject to the approval of Parliament.

THE PREMIER: Yes. The City Council had not much to complain of.

MR. DAGLISH: The Premier told us it was agreed to give the police court site to the City Council on condition that a hall was built there, but the City Council found there was not room to build a hall on it. Were we to understand now that the whole thing was off, as far as the police court building was concerned?

THE PREMIER: The City Council stated they did not consider there was sufficient room; but he took it that if they found they could not get any other

site, they would have to do with a smaller town hall.

MR. DAGLISH would like to have a clear issue in regard to the police court site, because it was stated a few years ago, and there was a big misunderstanding over it, that it would not be handed over until Parliament had been consulted. The member for Perth had stated that the deed had already been issued; but the Attorney General had asserted that the City Council had no title in the police court site. Now the Premier went farther and said the police court site was offered under certain conditions. Had the Government notified the City Council that, inasmuch as the council had found there was not room for a town hall on the police court site, the negotiations in regard to that site were at an end? Presumably the mere fact that this Bill had been introduced indicated that those negotiations were closed, and not that there would be an opportunity later on to build a town hall that would not do justice to the city and would not be large enough.

MR. BREBBER: The present site was too small for a town hall of sufficient size to do credit to the city. The best information that could be obtained in the city had been acquired, and also information from South Australia; and those gentlemen who had knowledge of that sort of thing stated that if a town hall were built on the present site the citizens would much regret it, because there was not sufficient land there to build a town hall of sufficient size. It was upon that understanding the council interviewed the present Premier and the preceding one, and entered into negotiations to see if they could obtain some provision whereby the citizens might choose a site of sufficient size to build a town hall that would meet the requirements of Perth. If the City Council could not get any other site, they would have to build on the Irwin Street block a town hall of insufficient size, whereas they wished to have a building worthy of the city.

Question (that the Legislative Council's suggested amendment be agreed to) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	16
Noes	18

Majority against ... 2

AYES.
Mr. Barnett
Mr. Brown
Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Gull
Mr. Layman
Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Monger
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Plesse
Mr. Price
Mr. Veryard
Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Bath
Mr. Bolton
Mr. Brebber
Mr. Collier
Mr. Daglish
Mr. Ewing
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Hicks
Mr. Holman
Mr. Hudson
Mr. Johnson
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Underwood
Mr. Walker
Mr. Ware
Mr. Troy (Teller).

Question thus negatived, the Legislative Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolution reported; the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Daglish, Mr. Brebber, and the Premier drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendment.

Reasons adopted, a message returned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1906-7.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

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

LANDS DEPARTMENT (Hon. N. J. Moore, Minister).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys*, £111,630.

ON LANDS ESTIMATES GENERALLY.

THE PREMIER AND MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. N. J. Moore): In submitting the Estimates for the Lands Department, I am glad to be able to report that as a result of careful administration I have succeeded in saving something like £11,197 out of the vote which the House passed last year. On more than one occasion it has been stated that a considerable saving could be effected in the Lands Department, and for many years Ministers have been exhorted to use the pruning knife at every possible opportunity. Several statements have appeared in the Press comparing the cost of administration of our Lands Department with the cost of similar departments in the Eastern States; and in this House some members have compared the cost of our department with the cost of administering the Midland Railway Company's lands. To anyone who has not given the question careful attention the argument that our Lands Department is extravagant may appear plausible; but if we go into full particu-

lars as outlined by the Under Secretary in his report, we shall find a considerable number of expenses incurred in our Lands Department which are not incurred by the corresponding departments of the other States. The whole policy of the department has been to dispose of the land on the most liberal conditions, conditions more liberal than those granted in the East; consequently the ratio of expenses to income must be high. The policy has been to secure an indirect benefit to the State from successful settlement, rather than a direct profit. For instance, in 1887 rural lands were sold at 10s. an acre payable in 10 years, the first year's rent practically paying for the cost of survey; and if any improvements were necessary the certificate of two adjoining neighbours certifying that such improvements had been effected was taken as sufficient, and on that certificate the title was issued. But at the present day, before any title is issued, and at different periods after the block is taken up, the department insists on inspections. These inspections entail a considerable outlay; and while in the past the land was disposed of at a very cheap rate and the office charges were apparently low, we must remember that as we now insist on strict inspections, it necessarily follows that we are faced with increased expense. The old days have passed; the land laws have been farther liberalised, and instead of the whole history of a block being comprised in 10 years, the life of a conditional purchase application is extended over 20 years, and latterly we have introduced the system of half-yearly payments; so that while in the old days we parted with the land for 10 annual payments, the payments are now spread over 20 years in 40 half-yearly instalments; and the new system entails a considerable addition to office expenses. All such concessions are costly; and it is unreasonable to compare the expenditure on land settlement here with the expenditure in any other State, especially in view of the fact that most of the other States receive a considerably higher price for their lands than is received here, and that in most of those States the full cost of survey is paid by the selector. Last year a motion was passed in this Chamber at my instigation providing that the selector should pay half the cost of

survey; and this has considerably reduced the cost of administration. A comparison of the cost of our Lands Department with the corresponding branch of the Midland Railway Company's business is very misleading, because the Midland Company deals with its lands from a purely business standpoint, the main object being to make as much revenue as possible by the sales. If the State lands were run by a manager on those conditions and he did not have to give the extended facilities we do to persons who select, it would necessarily follow that the cost of the disposal of the land would be considerably reduced. With regard to the payment of half cost of surveys we find that since the provision came into force in January last, for the nine months to the 30th September last we received £3,780. As this represented the first instalments on the half cost of surveys, it really represented a recoup of £7,560 on an expenditure of £15,120 incurred in surveys, the cost of which has hitherto been borne by the department. There is a steady and gratifying increase in the revenue derived from the disposal of Crown lands. In 1904-5 the revenue was £177,309, while for 1905-6 it reached £203,077. This year it is estimated that the total receipts from land revenue of the Lands Department will be £223,180. That this estimate is a reasonable one may be gauged from the fact that for the first three months of this year the revenue has been £74,381, which means that, so far as the land revenue is concerned, it should be in excess of the estimate given.

MR. DAGLISH: Will you put all the estimates on the same basis of reasonableness? Shall we test all the estimates in the same way?

THE PREMIER: So far as the Lands Department is concerned it has a steadier revenue than any other department. As a rule most of the Lands Department revenue is from rents. In addition to the sum received during the first three months of this year, there has been the money derived from the sale of the Sandstone township blocks, from which we received a greater sum than we had reason to anticipate.

MR. DAGLISH: The rents are due in September and March, and those are the two heaviest quarters.

THE PREMIER: Yes, the rents are paid in September and March. The money derived from the sale of the Sandstone blocks is not included in that £74,381. As members are aware, we realised something like £14,000 from the sale of the Sandstone blocks, and of this 10 per cent. was paid at the fall of the hammer, and the balance is due in four quarterly instalments. While there has been an increase in the revenue, there has been a corresponding decrease in the expenditure despite the additional services rendered to would-be selectors and otherwise. In 1904-5 the expenditure reached a total of £143,461. In 1905-6 the expenditure was reduced to £112,793 as a result of economy, a saving of £30,668, or £11,197 less than was estimated last year. While there has been a considerable reduction in the expenditure, land settlement has gone on very considerably, although the total sum of the land settlement does not amount to as much as it did in the previous year. This is largely due to the fact that there has been a very considerable area of land reserved from settlement with a view to having it subdivided prior to selection. Some large areas in different portions of the State have been subdivided; consequently it necessarily follows that the whole of that land having been temporarily withdrawn from settlement, the land selected this year will not compare favourably with that of last year. In 1904-5 the total number of blocks alienated was 5,601, aggregating an area of 1,375,763 acres, in 1905-6 it dropped to 4,291 blocks with a total area of 911,948 acres, and for the first three months of this year 1,119 blocks have been selected having an area of 279,997 acres. It will be seen that land settlement is still increasing at a reasonable rate. In addition, large areas have been taken up under pastoral lease. In 1904-5, 539 pastoral leases were taken up, aggregating 14,577,950 acres; in 1905-6 the pastoral leases taken up numbered 516, with a total area of 19,255,374 acres; while for the first three months of this year 161 leases have been taken up aggregating 4,482,233 acres. As a result of the trip recently made by Mr. Canning, to which I had an opportunity of referring in this House the other night, it will mean that

there will be a large area of pastoral land thrown open which has been practically unknown to the present. Mr. Canning in his report states that for 350 miles of the country he travelled over, something like 750 miles, he was able to obtain water every 10 miles at from 10 feet to 20 feet below the surface. That will mean that the country lying between Flora Valley and Auld Lake, country that has never been traversed before, will be thrown open; and there is no doubt that there will be a large area of pastoral land taken up south of what is now known as the Kimberley division. One of the first things I did when I took charge of the Lands Department was to put into operation as far as possible the principle of survey before selection, and I would now like to briefly outline for the information of the Committee what has been done in that respect. In the vicinity of the Goomalling-Dowerin Railway some 52,000 acres have been surveyed into blocks averaging about 500 acres, while 48,000 acres of contiguous land is now being dealt with. With regard to this land, for the information of the Committee I will read an article from a Wagin paper dealing with the class of settlers who have taken up this land. The article says:—

It is barely six months since the area south of Lake Dumbleyung, which had been reserved for immigrants, was subdivided. The area was thrown open to all comers, but the first seven to select were all recent arrivals from England, whose attention had been directed to the possibilities before farmers settling in this State, through the progressive policy of the late Agent General, Mr. James, in advertising this State in the old country. Coming from Wagin, the first settler on the area is only 15 miles from Wagin on the Bullock Hills road. Mr. Cass, who has taken possession of this selection, is an engineer, and the first object which arrests the attention of the visitor is a home-made windmill with a box behind it. In this box Mr. Cass grinds his wheat, and makes whole-meal flour for his own use. Mr. and Mrs. Cass are satisfied with their selection and pleased with their prospects, but are looking forward to the completion of the Dumbleyung Railway to enable them to get into Wagin to do their marketing. Mr. Lang's selection adjoins, and he has a good patch of forest down ready for burning. Mr. Kenward's selection is farther east, and this settler has made great progress. For the first two months all the water for the camp was carried on yokes nearly two miles from the nearest soak. Over 70 acres of salmon gum forest is fallen, and the big timber burnt down on 130 acres more, and Mr. Kenward

hopes to get over 200 acres down ready for the burn and in crop next year. At present Mr. Kenward has two sons with him and another young Englishman, his wife and the rest of his family coming out to join him next year by which time Mr. Kenward should have a nice farm carved out of the bush. Next to Mr. Kenward is a young Londoner, one of the two bachelors on the area. He arrived twelve months ago from London and landed with a capital of 2s. Obtaining work he saved up enough to take up his land, 320 acres, and buy some stores, and started farming on a capital of four pounds ten shillings. He has now got 40 acres of his heaviest timber cut down, which he is now leaving to dry for the burn on the 1st of March. In the meantime he intends to work and raise more capital to put in crop and improve his land. Mr. Fewson has 60 acres cut down on his block, and his brother, who is a carpenter, has put up a house on his block and has about 50 acres cut down. Altogether the work done would do credit to any settlers, and when it is remembered that it is barely six months ago since these settlers arrived in Wagin—raw new chums from England—it will readily be conceded that their progress is marvellous.

I think that is very gratifying when we realise that these men, only six months out of the old country, absolutely unused to the new conditions, have made satisfactory progress. It is evidence of what can be done by men of the right sort coming here; and of the country they are settled on we have many thousands of acres, so that we cannot do wrong in encouraging men who are determined and who are prepared to undergo a little hardship in taking up land in our agricultural areas. In addition to the land I have referred to, at Kwollying, about 15 miles south of Kellerberrin, 27,500 acres have already been subdivided, and a farther 90,000 acres will be surveyed before the 1st of January next; after which a farther 70,000 acres will be cut up. At Jenna berrin, 25 miles south of Cunderdin 18,300 acres have been surveyed out of an area of 24,000 acres, and large portions of it and several miles of roads are now being cleared by a party of men sent up two months ago, the unemployed of Perth. They are clearing the land.

MR. BATH: Clearing or ringbarking?

THE PREMIER: In some instances they are clearing 50 acres in a 500-acre block and ringbarking the whole of it. Contracts are let to these men, and it is the intention of the Government to add

the cost of the clearing to the cost of the land, spread out over the same period as ordinary conditional purchase land. At Coolakin Creek, about 15 miles northerly from the Darkan Railway station, 1,940 acres have been surveyed into nine locations and will be available shortly. In the same locality a farther area of about 3,600 acres is being subdivided. At Dowerin, to the north and east of the terminus of the Dowerin Railway, an area of 200,000 acres is being classified with a view to subdivision. It is anticipated that about 60,000 acres of this area will be surveyed this year. On the Gordon River, about 30 miles west of Cranbrook, 40,000 acres is being subdivided, of which about 30,000 acres will be completed this year. Thirty miles east of Pingelly 120,000 acres has been temporarily reserved, and instructions have been issued for its subdivision into blocks of from 400 to 600 acres each. It is estimated that about 80,000 acres of this area will be suitable for subdivision, and a large portion of the work should be completed before the 30th June next. In the vicinity of Wongan Hills 200,000 acres is now being classified by Mr. Rae. From 20 to 40 miles east of Marchagee, on the Midland Railway, an area is also being similarly dealt with, and the question of cutting up about 20,000 acres of this area is now under consideration. In the Plantagenet District, on either side of the Great Southern Railway, in the vicinity of Mount Barker and Marbleup, an area of about 600,000 acres is being inspected by Mr. Angove, the surveyor in that district, with a view to ascertaining what portions of it are suitable for subdivision before selection. Considerable areas of this land will be suitable for fruit growing and also for potato growing. A classification survey is being carried out over the country lying to the east of the South-Western Railway and extending towards the western limit of the lands selected along the Great Southern Railway, practically embracing the country between Pinjarrah, Armadale, Beverley, and Bannister; and I am at present considering the question of a classification survey of the country lying to the north of Doodlakine and Kellerberrin as far as Koombekine and Cowcowing Lakes. The Surveyor General recently made a trip through that

locality and suggested that it should be subdivided at an early date. There is a fine area of land in the vicinity, but it has been doubtful whether the rainfall is sufficient. It was proved, however, last year that the crops out as far east as Nangeenan returned very fair crops, and we anticipate that this land, which is some considerable distance west of Nangeenan, should be eminently suitable for wheat growing. During the last year two estates have been purchased, one at Brunswick and one at Wanneroo, and these will be subdivided and made available for selection at an early date. The one at Wanneroo is suitable for potato growing, and the one at Brunswick is suitable for cutting up into blocks for dairy farms. Altogether at present 17 surveyors are actively employed in classifying and subdividing areas in advance of selection. In addition to this special work, the ordinary work of surveying boundaries of land applied for is being mostly carried out by contract surveyors. To sum up, it is proposed to carry out classification surveys on about two million acres of country, of which it is estimated about 439,000 acres will be subdivided by the 30th June next. I have already referred to what has taken place in regard to recent arrivals from the old country. I may say that several of the proposals brought forward in regard to my immigration scheme have been put into force, although I propose to discuss the question thoroughly with the late Agent General (Mr. James) when he returns. The Government intimated to him that they were only prepared to welcome here men with money, and men who have had experience in agricultural work; men who were prepared to put up with a little hardship. The Agent General's officers are thoroughly aware of the class of settlers we require, and I hope in future none but suitable men will be sent out here. In regard to the recent Land Bill which was brought down, this opens up a large question as to land settlement; and the principal clauses provide for progressive improvements. I feel sure if that Bill becomes law, the reproach that is often cast upon us of having a lot of Crown lands in the vicinity of railways unimproved will be removed. Undoubtedly at present the improvement conditions are very easy.

A man can practically for six or eight years hold his land without doing any improvement whatever, except the fencing. One important branch of the Lands Department has caused a considerable amount of concern to each Minister, namely the accountancy branch, and it struck me very forcibly as being unsatisfactory. Some short time before I took office the late accountant of the Works Department had been transferred to the Lands Department on the recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner, to reorganise this branch and formulate a proper system of accounts. As repeated applications were being made to me to approve of additional temporary clerical assistance to put the new proposals into practice, I became somewhat uneasy at the evident costliness of the system. I was not satisfied in my mind that the system was all that could be desired. It introduced a new system, a card system, dealing with the various accounts, and I was not easy in my mind that the system would bring into force all that was necessary. With the object of satisfying myself that the expenditure was justified, I recommended the appointment of a board consisting of four accountants, to thoroughly inquire into the work of the accountancy branch, and bring up recommendations so that the branch could be put on a business-like footing. Mr. Gordon, of the Audit Department, was appointed chairman, and as a result of the efforts of the board a recommendation reached me a few weeks ago, and fully justified the appointment of that board, although the recommendation of the board is not as economical as I would have preferred. If it is carried out, it will have the effect of saving something like £900 a year. Both the Auditor General and the Under Treasurer have approved of the board's scheme, and I have now issued instructions for it to be put into operation as soon as possible. Eight temporary hands start to-day after half-past four o'clock, in order that they may have uninterrupted use of the books, to begin the work of transferring the accounts from the books and cards at present in use to the new cards. I hope that when this is completed, the Lands Department accountancy branch will be put on a better and more satisfactory basis than hitherto.

Last year, I stated that it was my intention to decentralise the work of the Lands Department, with a view mainly to expediting the issue of approvals of applications and giving early possession of land to settlers; and I have devoted a good deal of time to the threshing out of the details. Considerable discussion has taken place both in the Press and amongst many bodies, the Chamber of Commerce and other bodies who have taken the matter into consideration, and they appear to be very much concerned as to whether by decentralising the work the lodging of caveats and the registering of mortgages will be taken from the head office. My primary object in going in for this decentralising was to facilitate selection. The proposals I have made are to appoint two new district commissioners, with authority to give approval, and this I hope will bring about the desired effect. It has been decided to have the two most important districts of the State controlled by district commissioners, one with his headquarters at Northam, and the other with his headquarters at Kataning. These officers will have power to receive applications and approve of them. In cases where applications clash, the officers will be empowered to form a lands board to consist of the district commissioner, the district lands agent, and a resident of the district who by his knowledge of the district is qualified to become a member of the board. They will be in a position to deal with simultaneous applications. A man may put in an application one day, and if it is formal the approval will issue immediately. If there is any difficulty, or if any applications clash, these will be placed before the board, and the board will decide to whose application approval shall be given. These appointments will put an end to the present system, without increased expense. In regard to the present staff, several changes will be made. It is proposed to abolish the position of chief land agent, and in all probability he will be appointed one of the officers under the decentralisation scheme. [MR. BATH interjected.] I do not think the position is justified. It was an appointment made in Mr. Hopkins's time, on the understanding that the gentleman who was then chief land

agent would retire; but he did not retire. We had the anomaly of the land agent at Katanning receiving £650 a year, while the land agent in Perth was receiving a salary of £600. The question of retiring one or two officers is under consideration; but as I pointed out in the discussion on the Estimates a few days ago, in many of these cases there is a difficulty. Take, for instance, an officer drawing a salary of between £500 and £600 a year. That officer's retiring allowance would amount to, perhaps, £400 a year; consequently every consideration will have to be given to the question whether it is more economical to retire the officer or allow him to work, although the Minister may not be satisfied that the salary he is receiving is really earned.

MR. TAYLOR: Is the chief land agent the officer the Public Service Commissioner spoke of in his report?

THE PREMIER: Yes. There are several small increases and decreases, but in no case is the increase more than £5, as a result of the Public Service Commissioner's recommendations; otherwise there is no difference. Item 12 shows a decrease of £2,077, but this is partially explained by the transfer of the inspectors' allowances to item 42; which latter item I have reduced by over £1,000. It is not my intention to fill the position of Chief Inspector of Lands, rendered vacant by the death of Mr. May, who was a servant of the department for years. It is thought that by the alteration in administration the position will be rendered unnecessary.

MR. TAYLOR: You intend to abolish the position?

THE PREMIER: Yes, altogether. One or two inspectors have been brought into the office. I intend to make an alteration in regard to issuing lithos. which will show the date on which land is selected. When any surveyor is going over the country, if he has a litho. in his possession he will know whether improvements have been carried out or not.

MR. BATH: You will make the surveyors inspectors?

THE PREMIER: Last week I was beyond Bolgart, and I noticed several blocks of beautiful land, some of the best I have ever seen in the State. I inquired of the land guide as to how long the land

had been taken up, and he said three or four years. No inspector had been in that out-of-the-way place. If I had had a litho. it would have shown the date on which the land was taken up, in 1902, and I should have been able to make a note of it and see that the land was forfeited.

MR. BATH: No improvements had been made.

THE PREMIER: No improvements. I think the block will be forfeited this week. We would have quite an army of amateur inspectors going over the State. Anyone going over the land, if he had a litho. with him, could see if the conditions were being complied with. The alteration will not cost much, and will have the effect of showing if selectors are complying with the conditions on which they have taken up the land. A sum of £500 has been cut off the grant given annually to the Caves Board. That is news which will be pleasing to the member for Murchison. A sum of £25 has been taken off the grant to the land surveyors' licensing board. Item 43, which is provided to meet the requirements of the department for printing, correcting lithos., etcetera, has been reduced by £141. With regard to the exploitation of the North-West as a field for settlement, at the present time there is an officer engaged in examining promising portions of this vast area, and reporting as to what are the prospects of the successful cultivation of tropical and subtropical crops and fruits there. When that report is received, I shall go into the whole matter. I think I have given a brief *resumé* of the work of the department during the year, but during the course of the debate I shall be able to give members all the information which I have in my power in regard to the items on the Estimates.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.
At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. T. BATH: After hearing the explanation of the Premier, who was also Minister for Lands, in regard to these Estimates, it would be ungenerous on the part of any member, whether on the Government or Opposition side, not to give that gentleman his due meed of praise for the interest he displayed in the

administration of the Lands Department. Members recognised that the Premier was a son of the soil, and as such was deeply interested in the progress of the agricultural industry of the State. At the same time, one could not compliment other hon. members, especially those representing agricultural constituencies, on the interest they displayed in the expenditure of our revenue on this most important department; because before tea, when the Premier was introducing his Estimates, and also since tea, there was not that attendance of members representing agricultural constituencies which could, and should, be expected when these Estimates were being considered. One must take notice of the lack of interest right through which had been displayed by many of those members who constituted the Ministerial majority. When we were discussing that most important measure the amendment of the existing land legislation, there was a great lack of interest on the part of those members in regard to the clauses which vitally concerned those settled on the land. It must be admitted, however, that the Bill was designed and primarily introduced by the Premier for the purpose of doing something more in the direction of ensuring that the land already taken up should be utilised more advantageously and more to the benefit of the State than it had been in the past; and although on present returns, on the statistics which were submitted to members of Parliament, there had not been in the past that utilisation of the land which we could hope for and which was so essential for the welfare of the State, we might hope that from the operation of these new clauses providing for what might be termed more stringent conditions of residence and improvements there would be an end to the reproach so often urged against the lands administration of Western Australia, that it had resulted more in the encouragement of speculation than in the genuine settlement of the land. He desired also to call attention to the fact that although the Premier mentioned that certain information was contained in the annual Report of the Under Secretary for Lands, members had not that report before them; and it was certainly to the disadvantage of mem-

bers that they should be called upon to consider important Estimates such as those now before them without the annual Report of the Under Secretary of the department. That was not only true with regard to these Estimates, but it was equally true in relation to other Estimates which members were called upon to consider. We had not the reports of those who were paid to look after those departments, and whose reports should be available for the assistance of members when considering the Estimates. The Premier made reference to his scheme for the decentralisation of administration. Members would have liked to have had from the Minister some explanation as to how he proposed to adjust the present staff in order to carry out that decentralisation scheme. At the present time the Estimates showed the division of the department into many subbranches; and those subbranches were the creation of those charged with administration from time to time, with the result that the increased salaries paid had occasioned an increase in the cost of the administrative side of the Lands Department. And it would be interesting to know how the Premier hoped to adjust the new scheme to the existing condition of things in the Lands Department. He (Mr. Bath) had referred at different times—and especially when the amending land legislation was brought down this session—to the fact that pastoral lessees, under certain sections of the Land Act and also under the old Regulations of 1887, had been enabled to secure considerable advantage at the expense of the State by bringing their pastoral leases under the Land Act of 1898. This really meant that those pastoral lessees, holding as they did much of the best pastoral land in the State, acquired as it was under the earlier Regulations when that land was available, had been able to secure a reduction of rent merely by bringing their leases under the Land Act of 1898. He of course recognised that the Minister, in the clause embodied in the amending land legislation now being considered by another place, had made an effort to deal with the difficulty; but he (Mr. Bath) was afraid that this had been done somewhat late, that it was a case of locking the stable-door after the horse had been stolen. This matter came before him (Mr.

Bath) when he was in control of the Lands Department, and he submitted to the Crown Solicitor at that time several applications which had been made by pastoral lessees to have holdings under the 1887 Regulations brought under the Land Act of 1898. He was desirous of refusing those applications, but before doing so he submitted the matter to the Crown Solicitor, who stated then that the only remedy was to introduce an amendment of the land legislation in order to deal with these leases. He proposed then to embody a provision to deal with this in the amending and consolidating Land Act which he was at that time preparing. And the Premier, when he took office, must have known those files were in existence and that this matter had been submitted to the Crown Solicitor; and when he was looking after the land settlement policy of Western Australia, the Premier might also have looked to the protection of the State in order to prevent these people from securing this undue advantage. In the Report of the Surveyor General which had been laid upon the table, some information was given in regard to the arrears of work; and although the report stated in a general way that the statement of arrears was considered satisfactory, the actual table on page 4 of the report, showing in concrete form the number of arrears, did not make such a satisfactory showing as the Surveyor General would like to make out, because on December 31st 1905 the arrears on the compilations to duplicate amounted to 99.

THE PREMIER: They amounted to 167 twelve months previously.

MR. BATH: Still, although there had been that reduction there were the following arrears: 3,202 diagrams to chart on compilations 1,374 diagrams to chart on standard and working plans 808 diagrams unpassed, 17 original plans unpassed, 200 instructions for surveyors unissued, 3,150 C.P. leases unissued, and 1,176 pastoral leases unissued. This showed there was still a considerable amount of arrears. Those figures accounted for the expression of dissatisfaction heard from time to time in various parts of the State as to the delay in the transaction of business in the Lands Department; and they accounted to a very large extent for the criticisms heard

at the agricultural show lunch on the previous day, when the president of the Royal Agricultural Society said there was room for improvement, especially in connection with the transaction of business in the Lands Department. One recognised that there had been a decrease in the number of arrears as shown on the 1st January, 1905; but still the arrears existing at the present time totalled a very considerable number, and did not justify the Surveyor General in saying that the position must be considered satisfactory.

THE PREMIER: That was ten months ago.

MR. BATH: We had not the details of present arrears. The Minister for Lands had not given them to the Committee to show how the present position compared with that on the 31st December. [Interjection by the PREMIER.] As he had said at the outset, it would be ungenerous not to praise and congratulate the Minister on the efforts he was making as Minister for Lands to see that as much land as possible was surveyed before selection, in order to facilitate matters for those who were desirous of taking up land in our agricultural areas, and so remove a great deal of the dissatisfaction which had existed in the past. In regard to the question of inspection of land he recognised, as the Premier had said, that the cost of inspection had been very high in the past. The regrettable death of the Chief Inspector of Lands had given the Premier an opportunity of economising in that direction. The Premier had pointed out that various officers not now officially known as inspectors of land would be enabled, by placing the dates on the lithos, to practically act as inspectors and to find out in different districts where people were holding land and not fulfilling the conditions under which they held it. The Minister should, in imitation of the Mines Department, allow intending settlers to apply for the forfeiture of blocks held for a long time and not utilised. Many men would thus be able to take up land near a railway, and a number of unpaid inspectors would be created. As stated by the member for Subiaco in the general debate on the Budget, it was almost criminal to utilise

as revenue the proceeds of land sales. These moneys accrued from the disposal of our capital, and should be used for such purposes as railway construction or water supply, instead of for everyday expenses. The Treasurer who first earmarked land-sale revenue would make for himself an enduring name. The Premier, while taking credit for a considerable reduction in the expenditure of this department, should have given credit to the Labour Government, who greatly reduced the draft Estimates which they had no opportunity of submitting to the House. When discussing the items, reference would be made to the officer in charge of the Information Bureau, formerly Chief Land Agent. When Minister for Lands he (Mr. Bath) investigated the circumstances of this transfer, and it appeared that the officer was unjustly treated.

THE PREMIER thanked the Leader of the Opposition for his kindly references to the interest he (the Premier) took in this department. The Land Bill recently introduced, which would doubtless pass in another place, endeavoured to prevent pastoral lessees from utilising the transfer section of the Land Act of 1898 to secure reductions in rent. The hon. member's suggestion that applicants for forfeiture of unused conditional purchases should be given such blocks was worthy of consideration; but under the present system, after the landholder was notified, the land was thrown open at a fixed date, when everyone had an opportunity of acquiring it, and the board with whom the decision rested generally gave the land to the complainant. Much could be said against using as revenue the proceeds of land sales; and the Government had made an improvement by distinguishing in the balance-sheet between rents and conditional-purchase instalments, the conditional purchases being really freeholds maturing in 20 years. It was questionable whether the fact that we provided a sinking fund did not meet the hon. member's objection. It was true, as stated, that the Labour Government had reduced the Estimates of this department; and this year he (the Premier) had farther reduced them by about £12,000 as compared with last year's.

MR. FOULKES: Enough was not done in foreign countries to draw attention to our agricultural lands. During last year and the preceding year, when in England, he investigated the methods of the Canadian Government, who for many years past had an office in Trafalgar Square, with a staff of about 18, including Canadian farmers who lectured throughout Great Britain. There were branch offices in Cardiff and Glasgow. As a result of this systematic work hundreds of thousands of emigrants had gone to Canada in the last ten years. Though we had an excellent Agent General, and one officer, Mr. Scammell, in charge of immigration, the money available was insufficient. Half a-dozen of our farmers should be sent to Great Britain to lecture. It was useless advertising in the piecemeal fashion hitherto adopted. The result of inefficient work was to bring out unsuitable immigrants, many of whom had no experience of agriculture and would be unsuccessful. The new agricultural railways were very well, but we must have people to use them. The provision for advertising, whether from revenue or loan, should be far more liberal, otherwise the Federal Government would take immigration in hand, and from their labours we should gain nothing.

MR. WALKER: Had we not here plenty of would-be settlers?

MR. FOULKES: Yes; and every facility should be given them, as he hoped would be done by the Agricultural Bank Amendment Bill, which should cause a revolution in land settlement. But there was no reason why we should not secure thousands of extra settlers from other countries. We had spent money without any settled plan. We had advertised in various newspapers, but the advertisements did not give the agriculturists in Great Britain any information in regard to our agricultural resources. We had appointed lecturers. There was one man who came from England and spent three months in the State, and then returned to lecture on the State's resources. We should rather imitate the example of Canada and send farmers to lecture. Eloquence was not essential. We should have men with a thorough knowledge of the business.

MR. TAYLOR: And unable to convey that knowledge to other people.

MR. FOULKES: It was a matter of importance to pay more attention to the immigration question.

MR. EWING: Would the Premier say what policy would be pursued in regard to special settlement areas? There was provision in the Land Bill for special settlement areas. Men were allowed to take up a certain area of land, and a certain price was fixed for clearing and ringbarking. The man was paid 75 per cent. while the work proceeded, and when the clearing was finished that man had the opportunity of taking up the block or leaving it so that some other person could come along and pay for the land with the improvements. No better scheme could be devised. How far did the Premier intend to go with this scheme? In the Collic district practically all the area was held by lessees under the Mining Act. For many years he (Mr. Ewing) had endeavoured to get some portion of this land resumed for close settlement purposes. It was suitable for agriculture. The Collic River ran through it, and there was little mining timber upon it. Some definite policy should be brought before the people. Settlers could take up homestead leases on this area, but they were anxious to get the fee simple, which could not be obtained while the land was controlled by the Mines Department. The land could easily be resumed while amply protecting the mineral rights. The Premier was to be congratulated on the progress made in the matter of survey before selection. He (Mr. Ewing) hoped that in the near future there would be nothing but survey before selection. It was essential in this State that we should intermingle different classes of land in one holding.

MR. UNDERWOOD: There should be no expensive scheme of advertising for immigrants. The best advertisement the State could have must come from those already in the State. If people were doing well in the State we would get the best men from any part of the world to come here. Undoubtedly we had some of the best men from all parts of the world, and most of them had come here on the advice of their friends here previously. He himself had been the cause of from 30 to 40 people coming to

Western Australia. The best way to induce immigrants was to make the place the best in the world. We should consider that there were large numbers of Australians actually leaving Australia, and no one was more likely to make a good citizen of Australia than the Australian-born. There would be no advantage in sending farmers to act as immigration agents, because farmers were workers, not talkers. This State had most to gain from any federal scheme of immigration, because we had the land for the people to settle on. If immigrants came to Australia looking for land, we must at least get more than a fair share of the immigrants. We should prepare our land so that a man with little money could select it. There were thousands in the State now who would go on the land if they could see in it enough to keep them for the first two or three years on the land.

THE PREMIER: The matter of special settlement areas had been referred to during the second reading of the Land Act Amendment Bill, and already this evening. Men selected from the unemployed in Perth were now engaged in clearing 50 acres out of each 500-acre block, and in ringbarking the whole of an area south of Cunderdin, the idea being to add to the price of the land the cost incurred in clearing.

MR. TAYLOR: Would the men working there have preference?

THE PREMIER: There was no arrangement. It was intended to extend the settlement at Nangeenan on those lines; but those who evinced any idea of going on the land at Cunderdin would have an opportunity of doing so. In some of the settlements he intended to make arrangements that preference should be given to a person who owned no land except town lots in Western Australia. There was no provision at present to resume land such as the mineral leases mentioned by the member for Collic. We had the right to resume timber leases whether the lessees liked it or not, but we could not resume mineral leases without the consent of the lessees. He would go into the matter.

MR. TAYLOR: Could not the surface rights be resumed?

THE PREMIER thought not.

MR. HOLMAN : The coal-mining companies had the right to the timber and everything else.

THE PREMIER : If we could resume land we should be only too pleased to do so. There were certain areas in the neighbourhood of Collie that did not contain any timber, which would make suburban blocks for miners and those working in and about Collie.

MR. HOLMAN : The Government some time ago reduced the rent on special leases. A charge of 5s. per acre was in existence, and a month or two ago that was reduced to 2s. If the areas were no good for the companies, then the best thing for those companies to do was to throw up the land up and allow people to use it. In Collie the mines were not fulfilling the labour conditions. The Government would be taking a wise step to see that the land was made use of, or that the collieries should man their leases up to their conditions.

MR. TAYLOR : The member for Claremont was correct when he stated he had spoken in the House repeatedly on the necessity for a progressive scheme of immigration; but we had in this State a large number of men who were unemployed who would make most suitable settlers for our lands. Only recently in and around Katanning, Narrogin, and Wagin a number of men from the gold-fields had settled, and these people, from what he could gather, were the most up-to-date and most successful in tilling the soil. It would be wise for the Government to make some special effort to settle the unemployed on the land. One could not compare the land in Western Australia with that in Canada, because in Canada a man could take up land which was ready for the plough; there was no timber on it. But we could not compare Western Australia with the open prairies of Canada. In this country it cost £16 to £20 per acre to clear the land of the timber. Nor could we compare our land with the rolling downs of Queensland and the plains of New South Wales where very little timber grew. We had thousands of people in this State who knew exactly the conditions under which they had to settle, and these persons should be

considered before emigrants from the old country or from foreign countries. Any one travelling through the agricultural areas of the State must recognise the difficulties under which settlers had to struggle for the first few years during clearing operations. He was not enamoured with the great scheme of immigration as put forward by the member for Claremont. It was the first duty of the Government and Parliament to make our own people happy and comfortable, to make the conditions better for people here without talking highly and loftily about the great potentialities of our country, and sending lecturers to England, Ireland, and foreign countries to tell the people there what a great State we had here and inviting them to come.

MR. WALKER : And forgetting to pay their expenses.

MR. TAYLOR : We did not want people to settle in this country if we had to pay their expenses. There were numbers of people here accustomed to our conditions and climate, and if we had to settle people on the land it would be better and wiser to spend money in settling those who were already in this country and who were out of employment. When the Government brought down immigration proposals to the House, they were not going to get them through too easily as far as he was concerned. He wished to see every person in the country sufficiently safeguarded. Numbers of settlers were leaving this country and others were growling and saying they could get better conditions elsewhere. If a farmer with practical experience were sent home to tell the people what our country was like, perhaps some good might be done. In Queensland when he first went there in 1879, and right up to 1884, there was a vigorous policy of immigration which had been initiated by Sir James McIlwraith. Queensland was bringing out immigrants, paying their passages, and as soon as these persons landed in Queensland they did not like the climate and a great number went over the borders and settled in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. We had not the Transcontinental Railway yet, and if we tempted people to come here they could not leave us readily. At the same time there was necessity for caution, especially when we knew that there were

thousands of unemployed in the State who would make good settlers. In Kalgoorlie there were hundreds of men around the mines at each shift waiting for a day's work. It would be better to place these men on the land. Yet the member for Claremont advocated the bringing out of raw immigrants who, with the first mosquito bite, might faint.

[VOTES AND ITEMS DISCUSSED.]

Subdivision 1, Salaries—Lands:

Item—Land Guides, extra clerical assistance, overtime, wages, etcetera, £4,500:

MR. BATH: The amount voted last year was £3,400 and the expenditure reached £4,513. Was such a large amount as £4,500 required when we had surveyors engaged on the work of classification and land agents at the various offices?

THE PREMIER: The large amount expended last year was due to the additional expenditure incurred in connection with the accountancy branch. A staff was now employed from half-past four onwards every afternoon transferring the entries from the old account books to the new ledgers, so that a considerable amount of overtime would be entailed.

MR. TAYLOR: Would the item recur?

THE PREMIER: As soon as the work was up-to-date, the amount would be wiped off.

MR. BATH: How many times had it been brought up to date?

THE PREMIER: This chart system was a new system altogether.

Item (Accounts, Revenue, and Paying Branch)—Clerk £310:

MR. BATH: In the report of the Public Service Commissioner we had an officer No. 33 in Class c of the clerical division, and the Commissioner's remarks were: "Fixed at a maximum of £280. Not fulfilling the functions of his office." One would like to ask the Minister for Lands which number under the heading of Item 9 was the one referred to by the Commissioner.

THE PREMIER: Clerks, 1 (senior) at £310. In all probability this officer would retire. He was the late account-

ant. He (the Premier) understood his resignation would be going in.

MR. WALKER: We had another man, he believed, foisted into this department, which created considerable ructions and considerable expense. Was it true that Mr. Hamersley was likely to get out of his billet through the influence of this man.

THE PREMIER: No. 8 was the accountant referred to. This officer was appointed by the Commissioner himself to take the place of Mr. Hamersley, who was accountant. Mr. Kelty was the officer referred to. He was transferred from the Works Department to be accountant in the Lands Department, and took the place of Mr. Hamersley. Mr. Hamersley was now junior to Mr. Kelty.

MR. WALKER: Was Mr. Kelty going to retire, or Mr. Hamersley?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Hamersley.

MR. WALKER: And notwithstanding that Mr. Jull appointed him, had he (Mr. Jull) reported adversely upon him since?

THE PREMIER: No; he would not report against his own nominee.

MR. WALKER: The department, he believed, had not found him perfectly satisfactory.

THE PREMIER: As he explained, a board had been appointed in connection with the accountancy branch, and the report was to the effect that they considered certain changes could be made with advantage to the department.

MR. WALKER: There had been an investigation recently in this department, and that board had reported adversely to Mr. Kelty. Would the Minister have any objection to placing all the papers in reference to this inquiry upon the table? He was given to understand there was some very interesting reading matter dealing with this special gentleman recommended by the Commissioner and foisted into the department.

MR. EWING: The Commissioner should be able to deal with matters of this kind. The appointment of the Civil Service Commissioner hampered Ministers very considerably in purifying the civil service. This instance showed that the work was taken out of the hands of the Commissioner and put into the hands of a board. Was it not time to consider

whether we were not managed too much by commissioners? Should we not let Ministers have some chance of doing good in the public service, which they had not to-day? Many civil servants were underpaid, and there were many we could do without. He would like the Government to move in the direction of abolishing the civil service commissioner-ship.

MR. WALKER: Apparently a specially fitted man was required in the Lands Department, and Mr. Kely was therefore put into that position. If he was rightly informed—and he did not want to do anybody an injury, and the Minister would put him right if he was wrong—this gentleman had not those qualifications usually recognised as those of an accountant. He had recently started a sort of society of his own, in order to get a certificate as founder of this institution. He had created terrible friction and loss to the department, and had deranged the whole of the smooth working of matters. Two or three men had been ousted out of their places owing to his sinister influence. Consequently an inquiry was necessary. An inquiry had been completed, and one would like to be able to peruse the papers. This showed the necessity for removing this power of the Commissioner over the whole of the civil service. The Commissioner could not possibly understand the inner workings of every department in the State, nor could he keep himself conversant with the special abilities of each civil servant, nor know the necessities which were constantly changing from time to time, in all the ramifications of any particular department. It was necessary that the Ministry should have the staff of every department under their own control. The Minister was in daily touch with the changes which occurred in his department, and should take the responsibility.

THE PREMIER had no objection to produce the papers relating to this board. The board was appointed at his instigation. Certain applications were made for additional expenditure in connection with the clerical branch, and it seemed to him the expenditure was increasing at a very rapid rate. He was not quite satisfied it was in the best interests of the service. The Commissioner

could not make this inquiry, for the simple reason that it was an inquiry which could only be made by skilled accountants. With that end in view, an accountant from the Audit Department, the accountant from the Colonial Secretary's Department, and the accountant of another department, and one officer, Mr. Morris, from the Lands Department, were appointed a board. The main object of their business was to satisfy themselves whether the system which had been inaugurated was one which could be worked economically, and, if not, what recommendations they would make to adjust the present state of affairs. They had made their report, and the hon. member would have an opportunity of perusing it.

MR. TAYLOR: The Public Service Commissioner had not had a fair chance to show his fitness and qualifications for the position he held, because he had gone to the trouble of preparing a report submitted to this Committee. He had reorganised and classified the whole service, and we should know from the Government how many or how few of these recommendations they had accepted. The Commissioner had made suggestions and recommendations as to the value of positions, and in some cases had made reductions and in others increases. In some instances he had reduced the amount by almost half, and in others increases were considerable. One found on looking down the Estimates that in some cases the Government had struck a compromise, putting the amount at something between what the officer was receiving for the last few years and what the Commissioner recommended. If this State desired to see whether the Commissioner was a success in his post, the Government should at least carry out the recommendations. If the Government were to decide how much or how little of the recommendations should be carried out, it was not giving the officer anything like a fair chance to let it be seen how he was filling the position. Before we got much farther with the Estimates he would read something of the anomalies which that gentleman had discovered in our various departments.

THE PREMIER: Where the Commissioner had asked that a man should be reduced say from £450 to £300, the

Government instead of adopting that course immediately had spread the reduction over five years, bringing the amount down by £30 a year. In the case of a man who had made all his arrangements, it would not be reasonable to take off £150 from his salary straight away. This was not the time to go into the question of the Civil Service Commissioner. There was a vote for that department, and the Government would be prepared to give the hon. member farther information when we reached it.

MR. BATH : Whatever might be said by way of criticism or comment on the work of Mr. Kelty as accountant of the Lands Department, there was some scathing criticism in the report of the Auditor General for the year ending June 1904, in regard to the accountancy branch. An attempt at reorganisation was made as the result of those severe criticisms; and the Public Service Commissioner recommended that Mr. Kelty be transferred from the Works to the Lands Department, to institute a proper system of accounting.

MR. WALKER : "The last state of that House was worse than the first."

[MR. FOULKES took the Chair.]

Item—Chief Land Agent, £482 :

MR. TAYLOR : Was this officer identical with No. 66 in the report of the Public Service Commissioner ?

THE PREMIER : Yes. He was mentioned as "not fulfilling the functions of his office." The Government intended to abolish the position. Formerly the officer had charge of all land agencies in the State, and was responsible for their working. He would have an opportunity of applying for another appointment in connection with the scheme of decentralisation. He, when chief clerk, was appointed Chief Land Agent by Mr. Hopkins, then Minister for Lands, who thought that Mr. Ranford, then Chief Land Agent, was retiring.

MR. TAYLOR did not wish to harm the officer in question; but we found that £650 was voted for him last year and expended; this year £482 was provided; while the Public Service Commissioner through his report stated: "This officer's salary is shown on the Estimates at £650, but the Commissioner understands

that £150 of this is paid as travelling allowance. The salary has now been fixed at £315 without a special allowance. This official is not fulfilling the functions of his office." Justice would not be done to the Commissioner unless his recommendations were carried out; and the Government should take the blame. The public believed that responsibility for the service rested on the Commissioner created by a special Act. True, no Commissioner could in the short time at his disposal classify the whole service without injuring someone; but the Commissioner would doubtless consider appeals against harsh treatment, and make farther recommendations to the Government. For what period was the salary of £482 provided? Evidently for more than a year, as the Commissioner recommended £315. While the Premier was generous enough to spread reductions over a long period, it was to be hoped a similar practice would not be adopted with increases. The Premier was more generous than any of his (Mr. Taylor's) private employers, who had never spread reductions over a longer period than one day.

MR. BATH : If Mr. Ranford, the first Chief Land Agent, were replaced in that position, he would be worth his salary; and the Premier had let down lightly a former Minister by saying he had an idea that Mr. Ranford was about to retire from the service. The facts were that Mr. Ranford, after many years of faithful service without a holiday, as Government Land Agent at Katanning, obtained six months' leave and went to the Eastern States. He practically forfeited his right of succession to the office of Surveyor General, in order to take up land selection work. The Minister took it into his head that Mr. Ranford, absent in the East, wished to retire, and immediately appointed a successor. Mr. Ranford, on his return, found that the office created for him was filled, and that he was practically without a position in the service. He had been scandalously treated, with the result that he was now No. 19 on the Estimates, "Officer in charge of the Information Bureau." He must be eating his heart out in a little office in Perth, in charge of a few withered potatoes and apples. As Chief Land Agent Mr. Ranford would earn every penny of

£600; and certainly some appointment should be found for him where his great energy and enthusiasm could have full scope, and his many years' service rewarded by a salary commensurate with the good work he had done for the State.

MR. EWING: Mr. Ranford had rendered great services to the State, and had been rather badly treated. The remarks of the Leader of the Opposition should sink deeply into the hearts of the Government.

Subdivision 2, Salaries — Surveys, £27,420:

MR. TROY: Why was the item "Inspecting Surveyors" £93 in excess of the amount spent last year?

THE PREMIER: Probably because Mr. Canuing had been transferred to the Mines Department and placed in charge of the expedition to look for a stock route.

[**MR. ILLINGWORTH** resumed the Chair.]

Subdivision 3, Contingencies—Lands, £13,800:

Item — Margaret, Yallingup, and Yanchep Caves, grant to Board £800:

MR. HOLMAN: This item was reduced by £500, but the reduction was not sufficient. We voted money to the Caves Board year after year, and should know the exact amount of money that had been spent on beautifying the caves. Probably upwards of £80,000 had been spent, and the time had arrived when this expenditure should be stopped. We had built a Caves House, lit the caves by electricity, and had thoroughly opened up the caves, so that the board should be able to carry on in the future without State assistance. A balance-sheet should be produced to show how the money had been expended. We spent £18,000 a few years ago in building roads to the caves, and every year there was additional expenditure in opening up roads to the caves. It would not be well to strike the item out, because the Caves Board might have incurred liabilities, but the item should be reduced. No doubt the Railway Department derived revenue from the visitors to the caves, but as we had already spent over £70,000 in beautifying the caves it was time to consider whether we should continue the expenditure, especially in view of the fact that it was impossible to

get money to open up roads in the out-back country, when work of this description would do more for the people of the State. Our gold yield was falling off by thousands of ounces, yet we could not get money to open up the goldfields. He moved an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £300.

THE PREMIER: This item has already been reduced from the £1,300 voted last year to £800, which was just sufficient to pay the wages of the attendants at the caves and to carry out improvements absolutely essential. Undoubtedly the caves were a great attraction to visitors, and it would be regrettable to have the item farther reduced. Everyone in the State had the opportunity of visiting the caves at the cheapest possible rates. Coupons were issued to enable a person to visit the caves at from three to five guineas. Considering we had reduced the item by 40 per cent. the hon. member should be satisfied.

MR. TROY: No one took exception to beautifying the caves, but while we spent money on the caves the Government had materially reduced the grants for the upkeep of roads throughout the State. It was hardly fair to cut off the means by which the country was pioneered and to continue to give money to the Caves Board. While we recognised the advantages of the caves, when we were considering the necessity for economy and when we were cutting down necessary votes, especially for the goldfields, we should allow this grant to the Caves Board to stand by for some time.

MR. TAYLOR: This item was questioned year after year, and each Government pointed out elaborately how the item had been reduced each year. It was pointed out several years ago that the expenditure already incurred would place the caves practically free from farther expenditure, and that they would be self-supporting. After that we voted money for farther beautifying them, for lighting them by electricity, and for erecting a Caves House, and still the expenditure was going on. Taking into consideration the fact that the State's expenditure last month had exceeded the revenue by £40,000, and that we were faced with a deficit of over £160,000, it was about time the caves, in common with other beauty

spots in Western Australia, should be made somewhat if not wholly self-supporting. While the goldfields had been neglected, not in matters of beautification but in absolute necessities, we were asked to vote money on caves in connection with which the State had already expended something like £80,000. One dealt with this question with diffidence in view of the name of the influential gentleman, J. W. Hackett, which appeared as the signature to the annual report of the Caves Board. Any member of Parliament who dared criticise the vote for the caves must expect to be severely dealt with in the Press for his temerity.

MR. DAGLISH: The Press was not reporting the member.

MR. TAYLOR did not wish the Press to report him. This vote should be removed from the Estimates at least for a time; for notwithstanding the eulogies and the optimism with which the Treasurer had introduced the Estimates, the deficit was growing by leaps and bounds. And though the amount of the item was only £800, there were many such to be found on the Estimates, and they aggregated a large sum, items which could be done away without interfering with the prosperity of the State or with the opening up or encouraging of our industries. On one occasion the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piessé) had urged that if a railway were agreed to in his district it would result in the opening up of a large area of agricultural country; but in the following session that member asked for a large roads board vote on the plea that the railway was useless without roads to act as feeders to the line. The Estimates as presented to the House were the most striking example of "spoils to the victors" he had ever seen. He regretted that in the past he had been cajoled into voting for caves votes, but in this instance he would oppose it.

MR. WALKER: Money judiciously expended on the development and rendering attractive these caves would be well spent. This policy had been adopted by every country with natural beauty spots. Instances were afforded in the case of Yellowstone Park in America, the caves of New South Wales, and the marvellous natural wonders of New Zealand. But he objected to the manner in which affairs were being managed at

the caves; for it seemed to him that in voting money for the caves we were not benefiting the State so much as benefiting the lessee of the Caves House, the control of which had been taken out of the hands of the Caves Board and handed over to a private individual. If in distant Leonora a State hotel could be maintained, why could not a Caves House be managed by the State?

MR. BATH: That was just like the case of the smelter at Ravensthorpe.

MR. WALKER: It was to that he objected; that required correcting. After the State had expended money in making the Caves House habitable and the caves attractive to visitors from abroad, the only thing likely to make both ends meet in the way of receipts had been parted with. Why go to this enormous expenditure to beautify this particular house on lease? If we ran our railways with proper attention, had correct forms of advertising, and made the most of these natural beauty spots and depended upon our own citizens for the patronage of them, we should not require to put a single farthing on the Estimates for the caves. The pictures in the report did not give the faintest conception of them. One of them would do for a modified picture of carrots turned upside down; and another called "cauliflower" was such that he could not tell whether it most resembled a crushed pumpkin or a cauliflower. We were told of people coming here from all parts of the world. Had the railway benefited, or was it the case that when people came from any other part of the world they were treated as distinguished visitors, given a free pass up to the caves, and afforded all the luxuries that the caves could supply, without paying a penny to the country? If these caves were known to the general public as they ought to be, every year trains would be loaded at fitting seasons with passengers travelling to see them; but outside an occasional notice and a little paragraph here and there, we saw nothing; and this miserable gaudy attempt to allure people to the caves was just the method which would keep them away. And the letterpress was quite as bad as the illustrations. He might take any portion and show how prosaically it was written. We

were not treating these caves as they deserved. If they were located at Kanowna, instead of in the constituency of the Treasurer, there would be no need to ask for this money. But because they happened to be in that constituency, we were asked to pay money for them, without putting forth an effort to make these caves pay for themselves. He objected to this spoon-feeding of holiday-seekers. It was the management that was at fault. There was no harm in spending money on the caves, but let the revenue balance the expenditure, and let us, when we were asked to vote money, be presented with a balance-sheet. He would not take the responsibility of voting against the item, because he believed in doing all we could to keep these caves before the eyes of the public. But if in the future he saw no change in the attitude of the Government towards the caves, it might be an absolute necessity to bring the Government to their senses by refusing the vote.

THE TREASURER: If the preceding speaker had visited the caves, he would do his best to provide a sum even larger than appeared on the Estimates. The Caves Board, who did not work for the Sussex district but for the whole State, had performed their duties faithfully and well. After building the Cave Houses the board put in a manager, with disastrous results, showing a loss of some £600 for the first 12 months in which he (the Treasurer) was connected with the board. To this he strongly objected; and the board let the house on lease, converting the loss into a profit represented by a small rental. The sum provided would barely cover the salaries of the caretakers and the secretary. The balance-sheet when published would be laid on the table. The board controlled the Yanchep caves also, thirty miles north of Perth; and on these a considerable sum would be spent from this grant. The design on page 11 of the report gave an idea of the improvements intended. By opening up these caves so near the metropolis we should provide a pleasure and health resort for some 70,000 people here, as well as for country visitors. A large proportion of visitors to the Sussex caves was from the goldfields, and all visitors agreed that no money spent on the caves was wasted.

MR. BATH: The board managed the Caves House when the caves were not well known; hence the financial loss. But just when their expenditure was likely to secure a return by reason of the annually increasing number of visitors, the board let the house at a nominal rent of £40. If they had it now it would show a profit, like the Tourists Department of New Zealand, controlled by a responsible Minister. That country had a State hotel at Rotorua, and others at nearly all places of interest, and distributed from permanent offices in Sydney and Melbourne illustrated pamphlets to attract tourists, no expense being spared. We should do likewise.

MR. HOLMAN had raised the question to obtain information, but this was not forthcoming as to rent, revenue, or expenditure on beautifying the caves. About £60,000 had been spent on the Jenolan caves, New South Wales; and we must have spent more. From the report of the board it appeared that we subscribed about 10s. for every visitor. Was this worth while? Moreover, people well able to pay were sent to the caves "on the nod," while working people had to pay travelling fares, also 2s. or 2s. 6d. to see each cave. Certain visitors from other countries entered free; and he was informed that the board franked them over the railways, and gave them free hotel accommodation.

HON. F. H. PRIESE: That statement should not be made if not known to be true.

MR. HOLMAN: What advantage did we derive from franked visitors? Let us have a balance-sheet.

MR. A. J. WILSON: Members who opposed the item ignored the fact that the expenditure was rendered necessary by the tendency formerly exhibited by goldfields residents to flock to South Australia, the Eastern States, or New Zealand for their annual holiday. It was to avoid such an undesirable state of affairs that works of this nature had been undertaken by boards similar to the Caves Board. Members of those boards devoted their time and their business capacity to the interests of the people in trying to provide avenues whereby the people of the State could enjoy themselves. This item was not put on the Estimates by the Government, but was

there on the recommendation of the Caves Board. It was not fair to claim that had the caves been in Kanowna there would have been no vote for them; rather it could be said that had the caves been at Kanowna there would not have been so much talk about this item. Probably the Caves Board had recommended the expenditure of a larger sum, and the Government in the interests of economy had it cut down. Anyone who had been to the caves must be thoroughly satisfied that the expenditure so far incurred had been fully justified. The item under discussion was only a maintenance item, and after the expenditure in beautifying the caves, were we now to deprive the people of the opportunity of enjoying the benefits obtained through the wise and careful administration of the Caves Board?

Amendment put and negatived.

Other items agreed to, the vote passed.

Vote—*Woods and Forests*, £5,668 :

THE PREMIER: There was very little explanation to give in regard to this branch. There was very little alteration in the Estimates except that there was a reduction of £117. During the year nothing of importance had occurred in the department. The regulations introduced by the previous Minister (Mr. Bath) had worked very satisfactorily, though when they were first introduced there was every indication that they would be a source of considerable worry both to the department and to those working under them. Now that things were settled down to the altered conditions there were no complaints regarding them. Little had been done during the year in issuing new timber leases. A few sawmill permits had been granted, and they appeared to be working satisfactorily. A considerable amount of money was spent in drawing up a report and having tests made in connection with our timbers. These were completed under the superintendence of Mr. Julius at the Midland Workshops, and as a result of these tests there was every possibility that the trade in our hardwoods would be pushed, more especially in India. Mr. Adam, the consulting engineer to the Indian Government, had made a tour of the whole of the Australian States, his object being to

gain information in regard to our timbers, more especially the timbers adapted to railway construction; and that gentleman was more than pleased with the result of the tests. They were made at his instigation, and he had recently written to the effect that he was more than pleased with the results, and that it would mean that many orders would be secured in India. The revenue for the Woods and Forests Department last year amounted to £21,122 as against £18,578 in the previous year, or an increase of £2,543 18s. 4d. For the first three months of the current year the revenue was £6,467 16s. 2d. While the estimated revenue for the whole year was £20,300, the amount under the head of rents and timber leases was gradually lowering as leases were falling due. In some cases the leases were being thrown up. No leases were being issued now. The amount would be made up by increased royalties, as we were charging royalty on timber now. Under the new system, instead of paying a rent, timber cutters paid 1s. in the round for timber and 2s. 6d. for timber after it was squared. For 1905-6 the vote was £6,758, but only £5,785 was expended, there being an underdraft of £734 in salaries and wages, and also a decrease in regard to incidental expenditure. This year it was proposed to vote £5,668, being £1,100 less than in the preceding financial year, or £117 less than the actual expenditure for last year. During last week a large order was accepted, amounting to something like 300,000 sleepers, while two months ago Ellerton Brown's timber mills at Greenbushes secured an order that would practically give employment to 300 men for 12 months. There was a possibility of the export trade looking up, and he looked forward this year as far as revenue was concerned to the anticipations being reached, if not exceeded.

MR. BATH: No information had been given by the Premier in regard to appointing an inspector general of forests. Such appointment was recommended by the Timber Commission of which the Premier was a member, and it was pointed out in no uncertain terms that the timber resources in Western Australia were being depleted for export purposes, with very little advantage as far

as those operating in the industry were concerned, and with no advantage to the State. At that time it was recommended that a competent practical person should be appointed to take charge of the Woods and Forest Department, not only to preserve existing timbers and to utilise them to the best possible advantage, but to go into the question of reafforestation. At one time the Public Service Commissioner was authorised to call for applications for this position; and one noticed on the Estimates this year only £300 was provided for an acting inspector general of forests. Whatever might be the merits of this officer as secretary of the department, looking after the departmental and routine work, that officer did not claim to be competent to undertake the work recommended by the Commission. One would like to know what actuated the Premier in discontinuing the proceedings against not only the Combine but other bodies for holding timber areas without fulfilling the conditions. It was recognised in the investigations made that the Timber Combine held a number of leases, and that it could more legitimately utilise the leases from one central mill; and that nothing was to be gained by the State or corporation in carrying out the regulations strictly to the letter—erecting a mill on each lease. But apart from areas of that kind which could be worked from the central mill, there were other leases which were undoubtedly shepherded, and on which the lessees were not fulfilling the conditions—erecting a mill of a certain capacity. Steps were taken to have these leases forfeited, or to test the question in the Supreme Court. The Premier on taking up the office of Minister for Lands stopped these proceedings. On more than one occasion the Premier had been asked for an explanation, and it had not been given. One would like to know the reason that actuated the Minister in stopping the actions, and whether he was prepared at the present time to compel the people to utilise the leases or forfeit them for the nonfulfilment of the conditions.

THE PREMIER: The leases which the member referred to had been reported on, and those which he particularly referred to—leases 257-over-113 and 256-over-113—had been worked practically

continuously during the year. In connection with another lease which had not been worked, notification had been issued that it would be forfeited; but there was considerable difference of opinion as to how far we should go in regard to the forfeiture of the leases to compel the holders to comply absolutely with the letter of the law. It would entail a mill being erected on every lease, and then it would be only necessary for the mill to work one day a week.

MR. A. J. WILSON: It would not be necessary for the mill to work at all.

THE PREMIER: As long as the mill was erected and in perfect working order it would not be necessary to work it. It had been argued that it was far preferable having a big mill to work from one centre, which would entail a large expenditure of money, and would mean expense in laying down the rails to connect with the ordinary railway system. It was argued it would be more beneficial to the country that the lessees should be enabled to work that mill although the company would not be exactly complying with the strict letter of the law. As to the proposal of the member that the company should be prosecuted, the point arose as to whether any prosecution should take place from the date of the approval of the application or from the issue of the leases, and we were advised that no action would stand good unless it was taken within two years of the issue of the lease, and as many of the leases had only been issued last year it was thought not advisable to entail the country in heavy legal expenses when there was the possibility that the State might go down. It was his intention to see that the leases were worked; and he maintained that at the present time they were being worked by the parties who at present controlled the mill. Although mills were not in every instance erected on the different leases, yet on two leases under review, at that time a mill had been erected and had been worked practically continuously ever since.

MR. BATH: These two cases were only taken as a sample of others.

THE PREMIER thought the member referred to the particular leases mentioned, the one at Kirrup and the other on the st side near Berrigup.

MR. BATH : These two were only taken as a test.

THE PREMIER : The other leases contiguous to these leases were being worked at the present time. The only leases not being worked at present were in the neighbourhood of Jarrahwood, and the lessees had been notified to show cause why the leases should not be forfeited. As to the appointment of an inspector general of forests, he must plead guilty to having supported the recommendation that an inspector general should be appointed. Applications were called for the position, and the Public Service Commissioner received applications, but he considered that the parties who applied were not suitable; and bearing in mind that we decided to keep down our civil service as far as possible, the Government determined that in the meantime it would be advisable not to appoint an inspector general. However, he hoped that next year an appointment would be made. On the Loan Estimates the Government placed a certain sum for reafforestation. We were going in for planting softwood timber. This money was to enable us to get the country ready for the planting, and then we would have plenty of time to consider the appointment of an inspector general.

MR. A. J. WILSON : The position the Premier had taken up in this matter was one he could not quite agree with. The appointment of an inspector general was an urgent necessity. One had only to see what had taken place in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania to appreciate the absolute urgency of having an official of this nature at the head of the Forestry Department. There was no other State, perhaps with the single exception of Queensland, which had such a wonderful variety of timbers as had Western Australia. But here in Western Australia we were denuding our forest resources at a rate which was absolutely greater than that of the other States of Australia put together. As far as Victoria and New South Wales were concerned, they were already practically denuded in regard to marketable timbers. In Western Australia no practical or scientific attempt had been made to provide for the future requirements not only of Western Australia herself, but for the export

trade. The success or otherwise of any system of reafforestation in this State would to an unlimited extent depend upon the class of man we had to initiate that system. In his opinion the men we had at the present time at the head of the Forestry Department were not in any way qualified to carry out a system of reafforestation such as was required in the best interests of the timber industry. In order to obtain a man of sufficient capacity we should offer a salary sufficiently high. It was unreasonable to expect a person to come to Western Australia for £550 or £750 when in some of the older countries, particularly India, France, and Germany, as much as £1,000 or £1,250 per annum was paid to those occupying the principal positions in connection with the forestry departments. There was not only the question of perpetuating our natural resources, but the possibility of opening up avenues in regard to timber for which there was considerable demand, not only in our own State but in the sister States and other portions of the world.

Item—Caretaker, Point Walter, £100 :

MR. TAYLOR : Was this a new appointment, or did the item appear on last year's Estimates ?

THE PREMIER : A caretaker had been there for years. He was not quite certain where the item appeared before. There was an apparent increase of £118 in the clerical salaries, but that was due to an officer in charge of the Lands and Surveys being paid in this branch, whilst £100 for a caretaker was shown as a separate vote. Apparently the officer was shown as a forest ranger before.

Item—Maintaining nursery, and pine, wattle, and sandalwood plantations, £200 :

MR. BATH : It had been stated on more than one occasion in the Press that the type of pine that was being planted at Hamel was practically useless for commercial purposes. He would like to know the Premier's opinion in regard to the matter. It was said it was not the pine which was utilised for commercial purposes for building and in other directions, but was really a soft pine which when matured would be absolutely useless for the pur-

poses for which it was supposed to be planted.

THE PREMIER: The pines planted consisted principally of the species known as *pinus insignis*, which grew rapidly; and the nurseryman in charge had previously been in charge of a nursery in South Australia, where similar pines were reared. The trees matured early, and in South Australia their wood was being used largely in the manufacture of fruit-cases, suitable timber for which was wanting in this State. Our timbers, jarrah for instance, were too heavy for the purpose. The trees were profitable, seldom "missed," and appeared to suit the climate. A few firs and some Norfolk Island pines were also grown, but the nursery consisted principally of *pinus insignis*.

MR. TROY: Where were the sandalwood plantations?

THE PREMIER: East of Pingelly.

MR. TROY: Had any steps been taken to give effect to the suggestion made by the Timber Commission, that experiments in tree-planting should be made on the Murchison?

THE PREMIER: It would be an expensive business to put trees down on the Murchison, where the ground was as hard as cement. The only trees which did any good in that country were the indigenous eucalypti, the saplings and suckers of which grew to a fair size; but the mulga and other local trees, once cut down, failed to show sprouts. The gums grew only on the banks of creeks; hence it would be an expensive matter to raise a plantation there.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

This completed the Lands Department Estimates.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **PREMIER:** 1, Caves Board, Fifth Annual Report. 2, By-laws passed by the Municipalities of Perth and Victoria Park.

By the **MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** 1, Government Railways Report and Returns under Sections 54 and 83 of the Railways Act.

ELECTORAL—RESIGNATION OF A MEMBER.

MOUNT LEONORA.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter, dated 1st November, 1906:—

I beg to tender my resignation as member of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia, for the district of Mt. Leonora.—
P. J. LYNCH.

On motion by the **PREMIER**, seat declared vacant.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:35 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th November, 1906.

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THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

URGENCY MOTION—MUNICIPAL PETITIONS.

HON. W. MALEY (South-East): I move that the House at its rising do adjourn until Tuesday next, and I take this somewhat unusual step on a matter of great moment and public urgency. I do so because this may be the last chance perhaps that I shall have to refer to a matter which has been of intense interest