

the suggestion was made to me, I thought it a very reasonable one; but, nevertheless, I wish to hear the views of goldfields members on it.

MEMBER: Do you mean that the sub-contractor should be liable?

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Yes; the sub-contractor, but not the mine owner, in the case of a sub-contract. The working miner might be empowered to agree, when taking work under a sub-contractor, that he will look for compensation to that sub-contractor, and will not claim it from the mine owner. I repeat, my reason for considering the suggestion a fair one is that the Mines Regulation Act already throws a heavy liability on the mine owner. Of course, I do not for a moment suggest that any person should contract himself outside that Act; because its principles are sound. Except in the points I have indicated, the present Bill is a good one; and, moreover, one that is sorely needed. It has always been a matter of surprise to me that such a Bill as this has not been introduced before. The measure has been in force in England for the last four or five years, and no endeavours have been made to secure its repeal; neither has there been any outcry against it. Certainly the House of Commons is in the van with respect to this piece of legislation. I welcome the introduction of the measure; and I trust that when I bring my amendments before the House they will be accepted as just and reasonable.

On motion by **HON. F. T. CROWDER**, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9:35 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 30th January, 1902.

Question: Land Settlement, Dundas—Question: Moojehing Township, Survey—Question: Rabbits, Fencing Line—Question: Coolgardie Water Scheme, Scour Rings—Question: Railway Spark Arresters—Question: Supreme Court Buildings, Stone or Stucco—Question: Military Contingent, Uniforms—Question: Agricultural Bank, Branch Office—Question: Kalgoorlie Electric Power, Extension—Kalgoorlie Tramway Bill, first reading—Bush Fires Bill, Reconimittal, reported—Brands Bill, in Committee, reported—Annual Estimates (resumed), Railways to end, reported—Pawnbrokers Bill, first reading—Dividend Duty Amendment Bill, second reading—Adjournment.

The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **COLONIAL SECRETARY:** By-laws of Guildford and Paddington municipalities.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—LAND SETTLEMENT, DUNDAS.

MR. A. E. THOMAS asked the Premier:—1, Whether it is a fact that several and repeated applications have been made under the conditional purchase clause for land in the salmon gum and grass patch districts, situated between Norseman and Esperance. 2, Whether it is true that these applications have been refused. 3, If so, for what reason? 4, If the reason be that the land is situated within the Dundas Goldfield, whether the Southern boundary can be amended so as to include all auriferous country, and make available the pastoral and agricultural country for settlement. 5, Whether the Government, recognising the importance of land settlement in proximity to a goldfield, will cause inquiries to be made as to the suitability of this land for settlement, the demand existing for it, and its freedom from minerals, with a view of making it available for settlement, at the earliest possible date, on the same terms and conditions existing in the South-West Division. 6, Whether, if immediate selection be made under the Goldfields Act (Miners' Homestead Leases), land so selected may afterwards be brought under the Lands Act in the event of the Government

throwing such land open under the Lands Act.

THE PREMIER (Hon. G. Leake) replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, Because the land is outside the South-West Division, and in the Dundas Goldfield, and not at present available for selection under ordinary conditional purchase. 4, The boundary of the goldfield could be amended, but would not make the land available under ordinary conditional purchase unless an agricultural area was declared and surveyed, or the boundary of the South-West Land Division altered by legislation. 5, The Government recognises the importance of land settlement in proximity to goldfields, and will obtain further information respecting the locality referred to. 6, Yes.

QUESTION—MOOJEBING TOWNSHIP, SURVEY.

MR. THOMAS asked the Premier: 1, Whether the township of Moojebing was surveyed about 10 years ago. 2, How many allotments have been sold, and how many buildings have been erected. 3, What is the population of the town. 4, Why was a re-survey made recently.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, in 1891; it is a few miles north of Kataning. 2, Two lots; one State school. 3, One school teacher. 4, To provide farther streets and rights-of-way to improve the design.

QUESTION—RABBITS, FENCING LINE.

MR. A. E. THOMAS asked the Premier: 1, Whether it is the intention of the Government to grant facilities to the settlers east of the proposed rabbit fence to protect their holdings. 2, If so, on what terms will the netting be supplied. 3, When it will be made available. 4, Whether any reports have been called for or received relative to the rumoured finding of rabbits 70 miles west of the proposed fence.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, The matter is receiving attention. 2 and 3: Answered by No. 1. 4, Mr. Surveyor Canning, who has just returned from an inspection of the route of the rabbit-proof fence in this vicinity, reports that he saw no signs of rabbits, and is of opinion that the droppings forwarded to

Perth from Nannine are those of some other animal.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE WATER SCHEME, SCOUR RINGS.

MR. A. E. THOMAS asked the Minister for Works: Whether any of the scour rings previously inquired about have been used in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. H. Rason) replied: That such scour rings as could be satisfactorily repaired had been made use of.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SPARK-ARRESTERS.

MR. C. HARPER asked the Minister for Railways: Whether the Government propose to have any of the locomotives now on order fitted with the Dugald-Drummond spark-arrester, which has been so highly reported upon in England.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. Kingsmill) replied: Instructions were forwarded by the Colonial Treasurer (on the advice of the Commissioner of Railways) to the Agent General on the 20th January for two Class "E" now in course of construction in England (Indent 33/1901) to be fitted with Drummond's Spark-arrester and Patent Fuel Economiser. The engines under this indent are due for shipment from England between April, 1902, and February, 1903.

QUESTION—SUPREME COURT BUILDINGS, STONE OR STUCCO.

MR. J. EWING asked the Minister for Works: 1, Whether it is a fact that the Public Works Department contemplate substituting "stucco" for Donnybrook freestone in the dressings at the new Supreme Court buildings. If so, why. 2, Whether the Public Works Department has condemned the Donnybrook freestone. If so, on what grounds.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. H. Rason) replied: 1, It will probably be necessary to substitute brick and cement work for Donnybrook stone in part of the new Supreme Court buildings, owing to the difficulty in procuring suitable stone for the particular class of work. 2, No.

QUESTION—MILITARY CONTINGENT, UNIFORMS.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (for Mr. Johnson) asked the Premier: 1, Whether it is the intention of the Government to call for tenders for the supply of uniforms for the second W.A. unit to serve in South Africa. 2, Whether the same are to be made in this State.

THE PREMIER replied that the Contingent referred to was being raised by the Commonwealth, and the State Government had nothing to do with the supply of uniforms.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK, BRANCH OFFICE.

MR. J. L. NANSON asked the Premier: Whether, in view of the increased land settlement in the Northampton and Chapman districts, the Government will consider the advisability of at once establishing an office of the Agricultural Land Bank in those districts.

THE PREMIER replied that the manager of the Agricultural Bank would shortly pay a visit to the district, and the question would be considered on his return.

QUESTION—KALGOORLIE ELECTRIC POWER, EXTENSION.

MR. HOLMAN (for Mr. Johnson) asked the Premier: 1, Whether it is true that the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Electric Power Company are applying for extension to the present area held by them on Hannan's Belt. 2, Whether it is the intention of the Government to entertain their request for the fee simple of this ground.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, No application for extension of the area has been received. 2, The fee simple will not be granted, but the land will be leased.

KALGOORLIE TRAMWAY BILL.

Introduced by the MINISTER FOR WORKS, and read a first time.

BUSH FIRES BILL.**RECOMMITTAL.**

On motion by MR. W. H. JAMES (in charge of the measure), Bill recommitted for amendment of Clause 7.

MR. JAMES: The alterations contemplated would provide that from October

to April, inclusive, if a fire were lighted, the safeguards contained in the clause must be observed; but in so enacting, it must be made clear that persons lighting fires were not excluded from liability if any of those months happened to be "prohibited times." In different parts of the State, different months might be declared to be prohibited. He moved that in Clause 7 the words "March or April" be struck out, and "to April, both inclusive," inserted in lieu; also that the following be added to the clause: "Nothing in this section contained shall authorise any act or thing contrary to Section 6."

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

Bill reported with farther amendments.

BRANDS BILL.**IN COMMITTEE.**

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 4 (as amended)—Definition of terms used in this Act:

MR. A. Y. HASSELL: Had provision been made to earmark for age?

MR. W. H. JAMES (in charge of the Bill): Clause 9 dealt with the question of marks for age. There was no provision for age marks for sheep, beyond, of course, the cull mark.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6 (amended)—Description of brands to be registered under this Act:

MR. HASSELL: Five ear-marks were required in relation to the age of a sheep.

MR. JAMES: When this matter was discussed by the select committee, he understood the great difficulty now was that there were so many marks on the ear. If it were desirable to have an ear-mark for age, it could be dealt with on recommitment. He would confer with the hon. member as to the advisability of having such ear-mark.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 35, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 36: Stock branded under repealed Acts to be deemed branded:

SIR JAMES G. LEE STEERE: It would be unnecessary trouble and annoyance to require that all stock already branded should be rebranded after the coming into operation of this measure, and he intended to move that all the

words after "Act" in the fifth line be struck out.

MR. JAMES: Stock already branded need not be branded again.

SIR JAMES G. LEE STEERE: Yes; except for the first six months.

MR. JAMES: No; the clause provided that existing brands might continue to be used during six months after the coming into operation of this measure; but it also provided that all stock branded with a registered brand in accordance with any Act repealed by this measure should be deemed to have been duly branded under this Bill, except as provided in Sub-clause 2. Six months would be necessary to allow sufficient time for the new brands to come into use.

SIR JAMES G. LEE STEERE: That explanation was quite satisfactory.

Clause put and passed.

Remaining clauses agreed to.

Schedules (six), preamble, title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from the previous day.

RAILWAYS DEPARTMENT (Hon. W. Kingsmill, Minister).

Railways and Tramway, £1,121,986 13s. 4d.:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If no member had any question to ask in reference to this vote, he would make a short statement in regard to Item 9, "General Manager (salary), £1,500." It had been customary in recent years to make a statement on railway policy before considering the vote for Railways; but his opinion was that this could be better embodied in the annual Financial Statement. Hon. members were aware that the question of the General Manager of Railways had been occupying public attention a good deal during the last few months, and the debates on the subject had been characterised by an acrimony which he hoped would be wanting on this occasion. He had to announce that the Cabinet, after giving the question full and mature consideration, had arrived at the conclusion that, having regard to the report of the board appointed to inquire into the charges against Mr. John Davies,

that gentleman should have his suspension cancelled, and he should be restored to office. He would be granted six months' leave of absence, until 30th June next, upon which date it was understood he no longer desired to remain in the service. In addition to this leave of absence, and in view of his long service to the State as General Manager of Railways, it had been decided by Cabinet to give him, upon relinquishing office, an honorarium of £500. That was the statement he (the Minister) had to make, and he did not think any farther words of his could add to the information he had laid before the Committee. As, of course, it would be impossible now to provide the £500 honorarium on these Estimates, it had been decided by Cabinet that the honorarium should form an item on the Supplementary Estimates, shortly to be laid before the House; and hon. members would then have an additional opportunity of discussing this item. It was unnecessary to say more. He had given to the Committee all the information at his disposal, and in as few words as possible.

MR. J. L. NANSON: One point required clearing up. Had Mr. John Davies accepted those terms?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The decision of Cabinet was scarcely a matter to be accepted or rejected. It was not in the nature of an offer. It might be discussed by the House, but hardly by any person outside Parliament.

MR. H. M. JACOBY: If not accepted, what then?

MR. NANSON: It would be more satisfactory if the Government could state whether the offer was likely to be accepted.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was not an offer.

MR. NANSON: The whole question of the General Manager of Railways was one of the blunders and misfits of the Government, who wished to send away a good man by the back stairs. The country had been put to great expense in respect of the board of inquiry which had sat. How much did it cost? If one added the cost of the inquiry to the bonus proposed to be given Mr. Davies, it would be interesting to see how the total compared with what Mr. Davies had been willing to take before his suspension. True, at this stage it was

hardly necessary to discuss the terms, for the matter would come up on the Supplementary Estimates, when members would perhaps know whether this offer—for it was really an offer—had been accepted. There was a possibility of having to choose between our being involved in expensive litigation and giving Mr. Davies better terms. However, with the meagre information supplied by the Minister, there was no advantage in continuing the debate.

MR. A. J. DIAMOND: The offer could not be considered reasonable and fair; but as more could be said on the Supplementary Estimates, he would defer his remarks till they were brought down. The proposed bonus was ridiculously inadequate, and he would do his best to secure more liberal terms for Mr. Davies.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) had characterised the information as meagre, whereas it showed the exact position, and the precise determination arrived at by Cabinet. That decision could hardly be discussed, with a view of altering it, by any person outside Parliament; but discussion in Parliament was invited. Let hon. members express their opinions with regard to the honorarium proposed to be given.

MR. H. J. YELVERTON: All feeling that had hitherto existed either for or against Mr. Davies should be waived. He (Mr. Yelverton) had at first felt strongly that Mr. Davies had not done as he should; and he felt subsequently that possibly the ex-Commissioner of Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes) had not followed the best methods, though doubtless the hon. member believed his action to be right. The result of the inquiry had not been entirely what the Government expected. Out of seven charges made, Mr. Davies had been completely exonerated on five; and upon the other two, little fault had been found with him. Unquestionably Mr. Davies had suffered severely in reputation by his suspension; and as one of those formerly opposed to that gentleman, he (Mr. Yelverton) felt the Government might be more liberal in their offer. Some time might elapse before Mr. Davies could obtain a position worthy of him. Waive all thought of what was past, and deal justly with this gentleman.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: It was said this matter could be dealt with on the Supplementary Estimates; but now was the time to discuss it, for discussion would enable the Government to decide what course to take when such Estimates were brought down. It would be preferable at this stage that the Committee should express an opinion on the matter, rather than defer their so doing till the amount in question appeared on the Supplementary Estimates. If there was anything to be said, let it be said now and the matter disposed of. It was with diffidence that he (Mr. Piesse) again approached a subject which had previously excited such comment in the House, and on which he had spoken very warmly, feeling that an injustice had been done to a most deserving officer. However, Cabinet had decided that Mr. Davies was at the end of the year to retire from the public service; and that he should receive, in addition to the five months' leave which would follow in consequence of his reinstatement, an honorarium of £500. Taking into consideration all the facts—the many years of service the officer had given to the country, and the Pensions Act, under which the officer had certain rights, subject to the Executive—the amount offered by the Government must be pronounced inadequate. It should be remembered that the pension entirely depended on the decision arrived at by the Executive; but the Executive must show good ground for maintaining that the Act did not apply to this officer. Section 6 of the Act provided that—

It shall be lawful for the Governor in Executive Council to grant to any person retiring or removed from the public service under the Colonial Government, in consequence of the abolition of his office or for the purpose of facilitating improvements in the organisation of the department to which he belongs by which greater efficiency and economy can be effected, such annual special allowance by way of compensation as on a full consideration of the circumstances of the case may seem to the Governor in Council to be a reasonable and just compensation for the loss of office.

Apparently the object of the Government was reorganisation. They had seen fit to bring about a condition of things which must cause the removal of this officer. It was for the Committee to consider how far members might, in fairness to

Mr. John Davies, express themselves regarding what would be a fair retiring allowance. By section 6 of the Act, Mr. Davies was entitled to an annual allowance, provided the Executive Council agreed to give such allowance. Mr. Davies had been General Manager for something like 10 years. Taking ten-sixtieths of his salary, he would be entitled to a pension of £250 a year. According to the actuarial tables used by all assurance societies, Mr. Davies would live to the age of 64, he being now 40 years of age; and he would consequently enjoy for 24 years a pension of £250 a year. But if we were to take that pension at 15 years' purchase, and make a compensating allowance, that would be something like £3,700.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Davies had not always received £1,500.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: But the Pensions Act distinctly stated the pension must be computed on the salary the officer enjoyed during his last three months in the service. Seeing the Government had decided to reinstate Mr. Davies, doubtless on the understanding that at the end of six months he would retire from the public service, then Mr. Davies was justly entitled to greater consideration than it was proposed to give him. Notwithstanding what had been said against this officer, he had carried out his duties during the last 10 years, and therefore had certain rights under the Pensions Act. It was only just and fair that consideration should be shown him; and apparently an offer had been made by the ex-Commissioner (Hon. J. J. Holmes) of a year's salary, which Mr. Davies had declined to accept. Mr. Davies had since been suspended, but during the last four or five months had still been paid his salary. It was now proposed to give him five months' salary up to the end of June, and this honorarium of £500. Adding these sums together would mean that Mr. Davies would not receive the year's salary previously offered him by the ex-Commissioner. The additional amount required to make up that year's salary would be £875, taking seven-twelfths of the salary of £1,500 a year; so that, in offering £500, the Government were not acting so liberally as they had been prepared to do at the time the ex-Commis-

sioner had made his offer. That Minister had mentioned certain negotiations between the General Manager and him (Mr. Piesse), when he was Commissioner of Railways, regarding Mr. Davies' retirement, and had said that he (Mr. Piesse) had been prepared to give Mr. Davies two years' salary. That offer had not been made to Mr. Davies; nor had he (Mr. Piesse) ever said whether he was prepared to agree to giving two years' salary. The question had arisen at a time when it had been proposed by the Forrest Government to place the railways under commissioners; and then Mr. Davies, being naturally anxious to look after his own interests, had wished to know what it was intended to do with him, and it was then said that he thought—one believed the officer expressed the opinion himself—that he ought to get two years' salary. He (Hon. F. H. Piesse) would have been prepared to consider the question of giving him two years' salary in the event of the control of the railways being placed under commissioners. Taking the facts into consideration, the offer by the late Commissioner, after he proposed to re-organise, was one which Mr. Davies was not prepared to accept, as it was hardly adequate as a retiring allowance. We had in some instances for the purposes of reorganisation dealt more liberally with other officers of the public service. The Under Secretary for Railways, who recently retired, received a year's salary together with a pension of £300 a year, which of course meant that additional years must have been added to his services to enable him to obtain that pension. Therefore that officer was liberally dealt with, and he had nothing like the responsibilities on his shoulders which the General Manager of Railways had, consequently we should, under the circumstances, deal more liberally with other officers. Then, again, take the retirement of Mr. Campbell, the Locomotive Superintendent, who received a year's salary and three months' leave. We should take into consideration the position of the General Manager, and the fact that for 10 years he had carried out all the business of the country with great credit and advantage to the State. At the same time that was open to question, probably, by others, who might object to his opinion upon that point.

The question now before the Committee was that, a promise having been made providing that this officer's suspension should be cancelled and that he should be reinstated, he should be liberally dealt with. He took it that the promise was made by the Premier, because that gentleman said he would deal fairly with this officer, and no doubt that was their intention and still remained so. Taking into consideration all these facts, and looking at the matter from a point of view from which he could look at it—that was, that he knew the years of work this officer had put into the service—he was of opinion that under the circumstances the least this country could do for this officer was to give him a year's salary in addition to the leave proposed. That would be really less than could be claimed by the officer under Section 6, and it would after all go to show that notwithstanding there might be great differences of opinion as to the way in which this officer had carried out his duties, the country had decided to cancel the suspension and reinstate the officer, and to deal with him liberally. Throughout the railways of the world these circumstances would go abroad, and we had to carry on the business of the country, because, after all, our railway concerns were the greatest asset we had, and no doubt the greatest money-earning department in this State. It showed the biggest return, and it behoved us to act liberally in a matter of this kind, because we did not know any day when we might require other men to take on similar work to that done by this officer. He hoped the House would indorse his opinion, and perhaps the Government would be prepared to farther increase the sum. This was the time when opinions should be expressed, so as to avoid discussing the question again on the Supplementary Estimates. If what he advocated were done, we should, he hoped, see the last of a subject which had caused more acrimonious discussion in this Chamber than anything he knew of during the eleven years of his parliamentary career. He as one who had most strongly supported the action of this officer in the past, would welcome the exclusion of farther discussion on the subject. He did not wish to raise it again. We had said enough about it, and the only thing at present was to decide whether the

decision of the Government, because that was what it was, was in the opinion of the Committee as liberal as it should have been. If not, it was the duty of members to express their opinion in regard to it, and he hoped that opinion would be expressed in the most temperate language, and with the one object of doing justice to a deserving public servant. This public servant was leaving the country, because it was his intention to leave the country if these conditions were agreed to. Let him go. He had done his work, and let the Committee express themselves in a temperate way in regard to him, but by all means be fair and just. The proposal made was not so liberal as he would like to see, and his suggestion was, as he had said, that a year's salary, together with the leave which had been suggested, was the treatment which should be meted out to the officer.

SEVERAL MEMBERS : Hear, hear.

THE PREMIER : One was glad to find the discussion on this subject had taken the tone all had hoped it would, and he desired on behalf of the Government to assure the House he had no other wish then to act fairly by the officer in question. It was no breach of confidence to say it was not the wish of Mr. Davies to resume his duties in the peculiar circumstances, and consequently the Government had come to their decision with that knowledge in view. The matter was decided in the way the Minister for Railways had told the Committee, and he understood, from the remarks which had been made so far, that really the only point we need discuss now was the amount of the honorarium. The Government had decided there should be an honorarium, and he understood that principle was accepted on all sides. The only question then was one of amount, so to speak. The issue therefore was a narrow one. In making the proposals they had, the Government had regard to the past, and the honorarium was suggested on the basis of an offer made by the Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Holmes, at the time, namely that Mr. Davies should, if he thought fit to retire, be paid a sum equal to a year's salary. The determination which had now been come to was practically a reaffirmation of that offer. If the Committee seemed to think we should deal

more liberally with this gentleman, and so expressed their opinion, the Government would increase the proposed honorarium upon the Supplementary Estimates, and he understood the effect really of the proposal or suggestion of the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) was that the sum should be increased to £1,000.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: No: that he should receive a year's salary in addition to the leave proposed.

THE PREMIER: By placing this item on the Estimates, we had available as an authorised payment the sum of only £1,500.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That would pay him up to the end of the year.

THE PREMIER: Up to the end of June. But if we took a year's salary from date, or from the date the report came in, it would mean £1,000 added to the current year's salary. He hoped members would understand that the Government were approaching this subject in a spirit of fair-play, and with no idea of hurting anybody's feelings. We should deprecate anything like an acrimonious discussion on the subject, and he went so far as to say that he would not take part in it, and he defied anybody to draw him into a discussion on a subject if he made up his mind in that direction. He desired that this matter should be settled in a proper way for this reason, that when Mr. Davies retired from this service, what had happened should be no bar to his possible progress in the future, and should in no way prejudice him in seeking employment elsewhere. In other words, we were prepared to forget the past and start him, so to speak, with new or additional credentials. If the hon. member would name a sum in order that the Committee might express on the voices what they thought sufficient, or, on the other hand, if members would appoint a special committee of members to confer with the Government, no doubt we could arrive at a conclusion which would meet with the approval of hon. members. We did not want to take any division on the subject.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: No.

THE PREMIER: One would like to know without unnecessary debate whether there were any members in the House

who objected on principle to this honorarium being given.

MR. G. TAYLOR: For one, he did.

THE PREMIER: That was a fair and honest expression of opinion.

MR. TAYLOR: Objection had always been raised by him to such proposal, and he should object now.

THE PREMIER: The House was entitled to that expression of opinion, honestly given and fairly expressed; and if there were other members who held the same view, he hoped they would be what he might term equally moderate in expressing emphatically those views. He considered, however, there was no questioning the decision the Executive had come to except so far as regarded the amount of the honorarium. The Government desired to be actuated by the opinion of the Committee in that respect, because they had to ask the Committee for any sum that should be given. In the proposal on the Estimates only £1,500 was available. The Government proposed to utilise that by giving leave on full pay up to the 30th June. Any increase of the amount must be proposed on the Supplementary Estimates, or must await the Estimates of next year. Consequently, in order that the question might be now finally settled, the Government desired to propose such a sum as would be approved by the House without debate, and without unnecessary discussion.

MR. DAGLISH: What legal claim had the General Manager for compensation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Davies had no legal claim, and he could not sue the Government. That was his (the Premier's) opinion. If members would refer to the Public Service Act, they would find that, after inquiry, a report should be made to the Governor, which report would be considered; and there were several alternatives. Against the decision of the Governor-in-Council there appeared to be no appeal on the part of the officer concerned; the decision on the report being absolutely final. It was in the power of the Government, if they thought fit—and this the Government might do if actuated by unfriendly feeling or by malice—to remove the General Manager from office, or they might reduce his salary, or might reduce him to a lower grade in the service. None of these steps

had been suggested, nor did the Government propose to take any of these steps. If the item in these Estimates were passed, the Government would be justified in allowing Mr. Davies to draw his salary up to the 30th of June next. Any farther sum which might be given to him could not be given, constitutionally, without the authority of Parliament.

MR. NANSON : While agreeing with the Premier and with the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) that the General Manager should be treated with the utmost fairness and with all the consideration to which he was entitled, yet he (Mr. Nanson) was unable to agree with the member for the Williams or with the Premier in the opinion expressed that this matter should be settled in an informal and hurried discussion on Item 9 in the Railway Estimates. The Government should, in the ordinary performance of their duty, come before the House with definite proposals as to how they intended to deal with the General Manager of Railways.

THE PREMIER : The Government had done so.

MR. NANSON : The Government had done so in a highly informal way. In a casual sort of way they said they were prepared to offer the General Manager so much.

THE PREMIER : The Government did not say anything of the kind. They stated there was a decision of the Cabinet.

MR. NANSON : What he wanted to urge was that the proper time to discuss what terms should be made with the General Manager was not merely on a casual discussion of Item 9 in these Estimates, but that the Government should bring down a proposal embodying exactly what they were prepared to offer. Then the House could discuss it with a fullness which was impossible now.

MR. MONGER : The House could not increase the amount, but could reduce it.

MR. NANSON : There appeared to be a feeling on the part of the Premier, re-echoed by the member for the Williams, that to debate this matter would be like lighting matches in a powder magazine. His own opinion was that it would be perfectly safe for the Government to bring down a proposal and submit it for discussion. He was at one with the

member for the Williams in wishing that this incident should be buried, and buried finally ; but if there must be a burial, let it be conducted in the full light of day, with all possible publicity, and with all the accustomed ceremonies. Let it not be said outside that a question of so much importance was discussed by this House in a casual sort of way, on an item in the Railway Estimates.

MR. GARDINER : Where else would the hon. member discuss it ?

MR. NANSON : What he had suggested before was that it should be discussed on the Supplementary Estimates ; and if his suggestion to take that course was not received favourably by the member for the Williams or by the Government—

THE PREMIER : No ; for this reason. Because the House could not increase an amount in the Estimates, but might diminish. The House had not the power to increase.

MR. NANSON : While perfectly aware of that, it appeared to him to be an admirable reason for not having a discussion on this subject upon an item in the Railway Estimates, especially if the Government brought forward a proposal by which they expected the Opposition side of the House to assist them to raise an amount proposed by the Government. He (Mr. Nanson) could well see that to bring up the question on the Supplementary Estimates in that way was impossible ; but there could be no question why the matter should not be debated on a proposition of a definite kind, so as to have it entered on the journals of the House, showing what the Government bound themselves to ; and if that proposal were not suitable, we (Opposition) could bring forward an amendment.

MR. GARDINER : Dear me ; how nice !

MR. NANSON : Living under responsible government, he was unable to see why Ministers should wish to put the responsibility on others, and he could not see why the Ministry could not take the normal course he had suggested, instead of bringing up the question in a casual way on this item in the Estimates. He was anxious to give fair-play to Mr. Davies, but was also anxious to avoid an impression, which might be formed, that this House had settled the question in a hurried, informal, and casual fashion.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (Minister): While pleased to note that the Committee were prepared to approach this subject calmly, he did not think it was due to the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) that the Committee had taken this position. The hon. member had said this was one of the blunders, one of the pitfalls, of the Leake Government. His own opinion was that the Leake Government had made a pit, and some members opposite had fallen into it. Members knew that the Leake Government went out practically on the question of the suspension of Mr. John Davies; and if members in this House were not with the Government in regard to that action, the result of the Ministerial changes which followed showed that the country was at the back of the Leake Government on this and on other matters of importance. He considered it had been his duty to be fair and just in dealing with Mr. John Davies, also fair and just in dealing with the revenue of the State. He considered that the offer which he made at the time to Mr. John Davies was fair and reasonable, and that Mr. Davies should have accepted it gratefully, and retired from the service as quietly as possible. Reference had been made to his own proposal (as Commissioner) that Mr. John Davies should retire on a year's salary. That offer was made prior to the investigation which followed, but subsequent to some investigations he had himself made; and after the suspension came about, there was no question of renewing that offer, for the Government considered the matter so serious that an inquiry should be made, and it was made. The offer of £1,500, equal to a year's salary, was made not at that date, but at a prior date. The question as to whether Mr. Davies would be willing to accept the offer now proposed by the Government, there was no necessity for the House to debate, for according to the Public Service Act, Mr. Davies had no right to redress of any kind. The Government had made a proposal, and he considered they had taken everything into consideration and safeguarded the public purse, while at the same time treating Mr. Davies fairly well. The Premier had stated there was no desire on the part of Mr. Davies to return and take up the management of the

railways. His own opinion was that it was due to the country and this House that the Premier should say whether the Government intended to reinstate Mr. John Davies if he desired to return to the service. We knew the Morgans Ministry went before the country saying they were not prepared to reinstate Mr. Davies. He thought now that the country was entitled to an expression of opinion from the present Premier, as to whether the Government were prepared to reinstate Mr. John Davies if he wished to return to the service. The member for Sussex (Mr. Yelverton) had said he desired Mr. John Davies to be treated liberally; but it was to be found in the pages of *Hansard* that the same member had stated he knew sufficient, from his business connection with the railways, to justify the suspension of the General Manager. It was all very well, because Mr. John Davies was the principal paid officer in the service at £1,500, that he should be treated with great liberality; but he (Mr. Holmes) knew of men in the service who had been there from eight to ten years, and who, after being injured, were turned out and told they had better go and look for employment elsewhere. He knew of one case in particular, of a man who was an engine-driver and lost an eye through the falling of a piece of defective machinery on an engine.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That man did not lose the sight of his eye. He was working to-day on an engine.

MR. HOLMES: When that case came first under his notice, that man was washing out engines at Northam. He was a brother of the superintendent of police, Mr. Lawrence. He had his eye blown out, owing to the faulty construction of an engine, and undoubtedly he was put to do lumpers' work in the yard after he suffered that injury. Another case that came under his notice the other day, at the Workshops in Fremantle, was one in which a truck had been run over a carpenter.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was rather out of order in these remarks.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: Officers in highly-paid positions were treated liberally by this House, but in dealing with the cases of men in lower positions, there was no liberality whatever. Mr. Davies, if

treated as suggested by the Government, would be treated liberally. [MR. TAYLOR: Too liberally.] The Government should farther tell the House distinctly what they were prepared to do. The Cabinet, having come to a certain decision, should be prepared to stand by that decision. [MR. TAYLOR: That was right.] Instead of administering this business themselves, the Cabinet were asking the House to do so.

MR. TAYLOR: There was no responsible Government about that.

MR. JACOBY: The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) was now on the right track.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: If Cabinet came to a decision with respect to the removal of an officer, surely it was the duty of the Cabinet—

MR. MONGER: Why did not the hon. member, in his position as honorary Minister, see that Cabinet did its duty?

HON. J. J. HOLMES: Being a member of the Cabinet, he understood—

MR. MONGER: There was a split, evidently.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: When Cabinet came down to the House with a proposition which they said was a decision of Cabinet, he objected to the House being asked to suggest alterations in that decision. Reference had been made to the case of Mr. Alpin Thomson, whose office had been abolished. Mr. Thomson had been drawing £600 a year, and had latterly been of no use to the department. He had been given 12 months' leave of absence, and told he could retire on a pension. The Chief Clerk was now doing his work. Regarding the reference to Mr. Campbell, who had been given three months' leave and a year's salary, Mr. Campbell was an efficient officer, one of the best in the service, and had been got rid of because he could not agree with the General Manager. There was nothing against Mr. Campbell. He (Mr. Holmes) cared not what Parliament might think: he had a conscience which would not allow him to vote for anything more than the terms which Cabinet proposed should be given to Mr. Davies.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Regarding the case of Engine-driver Lawrence, he (Mr. Piesse) knew all the facts. This young driver, by some accident to the gauge-glass of his engine, had a piece of glass blown into his eye, which organ

was seriously injured. He went to Melbourne for treatment, and returned to this State. On his return he was unable to take up his duties as a driver, in consequence of his eyesight being affected.

HON. J. J. HOLMES rose to a point of order. He had not been allowed to make the Lawrence case clear; yet the member for the Williams was now giving his version.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The Lawrence case had caused considerable friction. Lawrence had not lost the eye; but on his return from Melbourne had interviewed him (Mr. Piesse), and the department did the best they could for him. When it was found he could not take his place on an engine, he was given work at a pumping-station near Northam until his sight improved. When it began to improve he went back to Northam. He (Mr. Piesse) recently saw Lawrence on an engine; and Lawrence said he was able to take up his work again, and he was now driving an engine. The only question was whether he could continue to drive. Every consideration had been shown the young man, and the heads of the department showed every desire to help him.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: Lawrence was washing out engines; not driving.

MR. A. J. DIAMOND congratulated the Premier and the member for the Williams on the fair and reasonable tone of their speeches. "Let the dead past bury its dead." The ex-commissioner (Mr. Holmes) was, he believed, actuated by a desire to do right. The leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) could not be congratulated on the tone he had adopted, and the ex-Commissioner also had introduced matter which might well have been omitted.

MR. TAYLOR: Straight talk.

MR. DIAMOND: Here was a public servant who had admittedly done good work.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: For which he had been well paid.

MR. DIAMOND: True. But if he went forth to the world bearing the brand of dismissal—[MR. TAYLOR: Which he deserved]—his career would be ruined for life. He (Mr. Diamond) was not an advocate for Mr. Davies, but having been one of the largest customers of the Railway Department he had found the

General Manager a very "hard nail" indeed. Mr. Davies had done valuable work for the country during most trying times, such as no other commissioner or manager of railways in Australia ever faced. The only corresponding case was during the Broken Hill rush from South Australia, followed by the Teetulpia rush; and then the exigencies were nothing like what they had been here five or six years ago. The present question was whether we should let this gentleman leave the service fairly or unfairly. [Mr. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] It was evidently the desire of the majority of members to do full justice to Mr. Davies. While indorsing the temperate and proper tone in which the Government and the member for the Williams had debated this subject, he would not indorse the proposal of Cabinet. The least we could do was to reinstate Mr. Davies as proposed, and give him leave of absence on full salary.

MR. PIGOTT: Was the hon. member in order in speaking thus on the Estimates?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. DIAMOND: Why should the member for the pearlshelling ground object to an expression of opinion? Mr. Davies should be reinstated; should be given, on application, leave of absence to the end of the current year on full pay, and a full year's salary should be given him at the end of that term. By this course the Government would do themselves credit, and would please the majority of people of the country, the business people and the railway customers generally.

MR. T. F. QUINLAN: In this matter he was guided by the evidence taken and the decision come to by the board of inquiry. Mr. Davies had not been found guilty of any of the charges, whatever opinions might be held to the contrary; and it was the duty of the Government to treat him decently. The Government had certainly come pretty near the mark in their proposal; but they might be more generous, because Mr. Davies had suffered considerably owing to the opinion which had obtained throughout the country that he was guilty, which in itself was a severe punishment, apart from the fact that he had been kept so long in suspense. He could have been dealt with long ago. As he had been 10

years in the service, he might well be paid 10 months' salary, £1,250, and given the leave he had asked for. That would be generous treatment, which would redound to the credit of the Government. In the police and other State services it was the custom to pay a retiring allowance somewhat in proportion to the officer's length of service.

MR. W. J. GEORGE: The calm tone of the debate was commendable, and he did not propose to disturb it. Without going into any points which might be pleaded for or against the Government or Mr. Davies, the facts were that an officer had been suspended, although in receipt of a salary during suspension. That suspension must be a stigma, and must have caused the officer great pain of body and mind. For any active man to be kept in compulsory idleness was the severest form of punishment, as any member who had had a serious illness must admit. Without going into the merits of the case, it was clear that Mr. Davies could not be permanently reinstated. If he were immediately reinstated and expected to carry out his duties as if nothing had happened, all knew he would not have the grasp of the work he once had, or that he would now have if this trouble had not arisen. He might be thoroughly loyal and do his best; but, once put a stain on the head of a department, and he would never get the same assistance from his men; nor could he work so efficiently, for he would feel in himself a certain weakness, and that idea would be communicated to his subordinates. That being so, it was not desirable that Mr. John Davies should resume as a permanency the position of General Manager of the Government Railways. He would not desire it, and the Government would not desire it, therefore we had to find a medium way in which to meet the situation and do that which was fair and just to both parties. He understood the Government proposal to be that this gentleman should be reinstated. That was right. The General Manager must be reinstated, if they wanted to be just, unless they wished to make a barrier against him for the rest of his life. The Government proposed to reinstate him, and that showed that they thought some injury had been done to him, and they wished to repair it if possible. They also

proposed to give him a few months' leave and, he believed, the sum of £500. In his opinion that amount was too small. In his private capacity, if he were in this situation and had the means, he would give him his salary to the end of this financial year and 12 months' leave on full pay. He did not know whether the Government could or could not do that. They could do so if the Committee were unanimous.

MEMBER : Not leave.

MR. GEORGE : They could give him 12 months' salary, anyhow. Surely the State of Western Australia could afford to err, if it would be erring, on the side of generosity when they wanted to be fair. If the Government were to agree to give Mr. Davies £500, or whatever it was, to the 30th June, and also an honorarium of £1,000, the Committee might fairly consent; and if he were speaking as a friend of Mr. Davies (and he was not ashamed to do so, for he believed in the man thoroughly, just as much as ever he did), he would advise him to take that amount. He asked the Committee not to take his word as that of a friend of Mr. Davies, but as a friend of Western Australia. Western Australia had been good to him, and he was as jealous of the reputation of this State as any man could possibly be. Mr. Davies had had 10 years' service in the State, and had organised the railways against terrible difficulties. He had faults, as we all had, and he made mistakes, as we all did, but he carried out a difficult task during the last 10 years. For some reason we desired to sever the connection, but we should not send that officer away and let it be known that if a man came into the Western Australian service he could not expect to be fairly treated. He commended this suggestion to the Government with such weight as he had, if any. He thought that would be a fair compromise, and he sincerely trusted the Committee would agree to it.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS : Was this a general discussion on the railway vote?

THE CHAIRMAN : No; it was on No. 9.

MR. HOPKINS : It was not so understood by him.

THE CHAIRMAN : It was distinctly stated.

THE PREMIER said he asked if any member wished to speak.

MR. S. C. PIGOTT : When he heard the Minister for Railways make a statement to-night, he was quite willing to accept it as final, and he did not see why the whole Committee should not accept it as final. There was one point about this matter that he did not like, and that was the way the Ministry were trying to shelter their actions behind Parliament.

THE PREMIER : The Government were willing to stick to what they said.

MR. PIGOTT : The Government took office knowing the responsibility, and they should be held to their responsibility. It appeared the Minister for Railways was quite agreeable to that course. The Minister for Railways said we had not to make an offer, and that the Government had to give a decision. The Cabinet ought to act up to their responsibilities and make a final decision, and act on it. If they made a mistake, let them accept the responsibility from the general public afterwards.

MR. R. HASTIE : Some members particularly wished the Government to make this a question on which they were to stand or fall, but he would ask those gentlemen to bear in mind what the consequences would be if the Government came into the House and always stuck to their decision. If that were the case, we should not always be able to consider these questions with an open mind and express our feelings as we possibly would otherwise, because we should then consider the question, "What will be the consequences if the Government fall?" At the same time we had to admit that a precedent of this kind was somewhat unfortunate. This was the second or third time the Government had practically invited the House to state their opinion on an amount of money to be increased. In previous times that debate was stopped because the discussion was somewhat unsatisfactory, and he apprehended it would be so in this case also. There was one curious coincidence in connection with the occasions on which they had followed this course and it was this, that in every instance in which the Government said a man ought to get a fair sum, or in which they gave us an opportunity to suggest a fair sum it was in relation to a man who

had already received a large salary. The Government did not judge all men alike. As had been pointed out, where a man was in receipt of a large salary like Mr. John Davies he had to get some special consideration, whereas, on the other hand, when a man was deprived of his employment we were told he had no legal claim, and in nineteen cases out of twenty he had not received any special consideration. He did not think on the whole it was wise for the Government to follow this course of leaving the matter for the Committee to judge; and very largely for this reason. Most men here were generous. They liked to say that they were particularly generous and wanted to do justice. When they wanted to do that they had only one consideration in their minds at the particular time, and they said, "Let us give him additional money," the reason being that the money was not their own. He would not suggest for a moment that some of those gentlemen who proposed a large sum would not act in a similar way if it were their own money they were dealing with, but he would ask them to bear in mind that the money was not our own, but the country's. Practically we were asked to be generous with other people's money, and to give Mr. John Davies a special sum of money, more than was usually given to men in another class of the community when they left the service. The Government proposed to give to Mr. John Davies the sum of £1,250. It had been stated the sum was £500, but we all knew that was really not the case, because he was to get £750 when he did not attend to his duties, and he was open to accept other employment next week, if he liked, so that altogether he would get £1,250. The Premier told us Mr. Davies had no legal claim, but inasmuch as we had always been in the habit of giving special consideration to those who were already well paid, he (Mr. Hastie) thought if members really considered the matter, they would see that this was a very fair compromise. It might be said by some members that we would be generous to John Davies and also to other people who had not hitherto been so fortunately circumstanced; but if we did that, we should find we had not sufficient money to go round. The country could not afford it, and therefore we must take up

the position that we should not unduly increase the amount of emolument to civil servants. He hoped members would continue to approach the subject in the manner in which they had hitherto done so, and stick to the one particular point before the Committee, that being as to what amount Mr. John Davies ought to get.

MR. J. GARDINER: During the discussion of this subject before the House he was no friend to the General Manager of Railways; therefore on a question such as this it could hardly be said that he was actuated by bias in that particular direction. However much we might think individually of the management of the railways, and the result of that report, it must be self evident to us that the report, owing to circumstances, did not blame John Davies, or did not find him guilty of anything that was grave; consequently seeing that we permitted him to appeal to Cæsar, and Cæsar's verdict was of such a description that it was very difficult either to exonerate him or to blame him, we had to face the position. In those debates he said that if Mr. Davies submitted himself to a board and the board found him not guilty, he would be one of the first to see that every remedy we could give him should be given. When the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) spoke, he (Mr. Gardiner) was under the impression that Mr. John Davies had some legal position with regard to this. He said "hear, hear" to the proposal, that being for the simple reason that he had summed it up in his mind, and said: If this case were taken into the court—

HON. F. H. PRESSE: Nothing about the legal point was said by him.

MR. GARDINER: What he was now stating was his own impression.

HON. F. H. PRESSE: What he asserted was that it rested purely with the Executive.

MR. GARDINER: The impression on his own mind was that Mr. Davies had a legal position. He thought that if the matter were taken into court the case would be lengthy and costly, and therefore he said "hear, hear" to the proposal of the member for the Williams, because he thought that by adopting it we should be protecting the finances of the country. One would know what a case like that

would involve. However, the Attorney General had told us that Mr. Davies had no legal position; consequently the only thing we had to consider was our responsibility. Whether it was in the public service or in private service it was unfortunate that consideration was always given to the man at the top of the tree. A man of large business experience might have in his employment a person with grave responsibility, who had been a servant for 10 or 12 years and probably had a very large salary, but a time might come when he would be dissatisfied with that man and would want to call him to account, yet when he did call him to account he would do so weighing in his own mind his faithfulness in the years gone by.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. J. GARDINER: If members thoroughly understood how the Government had arrived at the amount proposed to be paid to Mr. John Davies, probably the Committee would have accepted the Government's suggestion, and not debated the subject at all. He believed the decision arrived at was to pay Mr. John Davies one year's salary from the time the board of inquiry brought in its decision. The Government might have thought, from the report of the board, that they would be quite justified, had they remained in power, in treating with Mr. Davies by saying, "We look on you as an obstacle in the reorganisation of this great department; consequently we are prepared to give you six months' leave of absence, and pay you one year's salary from the date of the decision of the board." The present discussion was only anticipating that which must take place at a later date when the Supplementary Estimates came down, and the Committee were not in a position at present to arrive at a decision on the amount to be paid to Mr. Davies. Apparently the Government were trying to find out the temper of the House; but he thought if they had adhered to the decision of the Minister for Railways in the first instance, and had said that having considered the whole matter the sum they proposed to pay was a just sum, there would have

been no necessity for this discussion at the present time. He was willing to support the suggestion of the Government as a just one; and considering all the circumstances he regarded the offer as one which Mr. Davies could not well cavil at. If the Government reinstated him in the position of General Manager, on the distinct understanding that he was not to occupy the office but to take leave of absence, they gave him an opportunity of seeking employment elsewhere with a clean bill of health. Therefore it was not a question of qualification in seeking employment elsewhere, but there was the fact that the Government of this State had decided that the time had arrived when he as General Manager of Railways had outlived his usefulness in the particular sphere. There was a desire outside the House to see this question settled once and finally, and the temper of the public was in favour of paying Mr. John Davies something to get rid of him finally. If the Committee chose to make the sum larger than the Government now suggested, he must say that, having regard to the assurance of the Attorney General that Mr. Davies had no legal right to claim compensation, he considered the offer made a just and fair offer, and that Mr. Davies, if he were wise, should accept it.

MR. JACOBY: One had some difficulty in understanding the position the Government had taken up. They were trying to throw on the shoulders of members generally the responsibility which attached properly to the Government. The Committee were informed that the Cabinet had decided to pay Mr. John Davies a certain sum. The Premier said he was willing to have the question discussed, and even to meet three or four members from the Opposition side to settle what the amount should be. Another member of the Cabinet had told the Committee that the thing was settled in Cabinet, but that he as a member of the Cabinet disagreed with the course the Premier had taken this afternoon. It was an improper position for the Premier to ask the Committee to tell him—not being himself able to decide what was a fair thing—how much should be offered to Mr. John Davies. Surely the Government had a mind of their own on this matter. Members were not here to give

the Government an idea of what would be a fair thing in reference to Mr. John Davies. The Government should have an idea of their own, and if they put it before the Committee, members would be able to express their opinions, and say whether they disagreed or not with the proposals of the Government. This was not the only occasion on which the Government had asked the House to lay down a policy for them. He referred to the Coolgardie water scheme contract for caulking the pipes; and practically the two cases were similar. If he understood party government, it meant responsibility on the part of the Cabinet as the governing body.

MR. GEORGE: This was not a question of party government.

MR. JACOBY: The Ministerial head of the department should give an idea of what he thought should be done in an important matter concerning his department; he should show that he had confidence in his opinion; and he should not come to the House and say that he had a certain idea, but if members of the House differed from him he was willing to alter it. That was exactly the position the Premier had taken. Seeing that the Government did not know their own mind on the subject, he (Mr. Jacoby) might be excused if he refrained at the present time from saying whether he agreed or not to the amount suggested. When the Government made a definite recommendation to the House, he would say whether he was prepared to agree with it or not.

MR. W. J. GEORGE: Members would probably agree with the last sentiment expressed by the hon. member. For himself he must express regret that after what had passed on this question we should be again approaching what we could do without for the rest of the session—that was party squabbling. He was not afraid to fight now if it were necessary as he had fought in the past, and was not afraid to practise self-abnegation when it became necessary in the interests of the country.

MR. TAYLOR: That must be hard for the hon. member.

MR. GEORGE: It was a hard thing for him to say, but he was going to do it. He would not join with members on this (Opposition) side in trying to light up

the embers of party strife. One member had spoken of the difference between the treatment of a man employed at 8s. a day and that accorded to a general manager of railways. It was self-evident that equal justice should be meted out to each.

MR. TAYLOR: But that was not done.

MR. GEORGE: It was. But a man earning a small daily wage had, if he lost his employment, numerous avenues in which he could earn a living; whereas a man who had attained the high position of General Manager of Railways, or Engineer-in-Chief, or perhaps leader of the Bar, had, as compared with the ordinary wage-earner, few opportunities of securing a position suited to his abilities. No man obtained a position of General Manager of Railways who had not fought his way up from the ranks, as Mr. John Davies had done.

MR. TAYLOR: And then worked himself out of his billet.

MR. GEORGE: If the member interjecting were loyal to labour principles, he would not take exception to Mr. Davies for having worked his way up from the bottom rung of the ladder.

MR. TAYLOR: No exception was taken to that.

MR. GEORGE: The member for Albany (Mr. Gardiner) said consideration was always given to the man at the top of the tree, and seldom to the man at the bottom. That was not quite accurate. Great consideration was given by most people to a man who had risen from the ranks.

MR. TAYLOR: After he had risen; not before.

MR. GEORGE: The member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby) said the Government were trying to throw on the Committee the responsibility for the action of the Cabinet. If so, he (Mr. George) admired the Government for their courage in incurring much ridicule and opprobrium. Considerable pluck was required to admit that one was wrong. Mr. Taylor had never tried to do that, so he did not know what it involved. He (Mr. George) had done it.

MR. TAYLOR: The hon. member was always in the wrong.

MR. GEORGE: Mention had been made of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. What would be said of a Government which

should undertake such a scheme without consulting the House? In great emergencies the Government would be traitors to the country if they acted on their own initiative, without the consent of Parliament. For years past it had been and it still was deplorable that the exigencies of party made it necessary for an Opposition to attack a Government, whether or not the Government were acting squarely. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.]

MR. W. M. PURKISS: It was pleasing to hear the statement by the Minister for Railways that the Government intended to reinstate Mr. John Davies. The attitude of the Government, and especially of the late Minister for Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes) had been magnanimous, and their action would make the past a closed book. It was also gratifying that Mr. Davies desired or intended to retire at the end of the current financial year. For a long time he (Mr. Purkiss) had suspended his judgment concerning Mr. Davies, though he had heard and read much for and against that gentleman, and had been associated with and briefed in matters in which Mr. Davies's conduct had come under his notice. He (Mr. Purkiss) did not blame Mr. Davies and did not praise him. He was pleased at the action of Government, for the reason that, rightly or wrongly, Mr. Davies had at one time become, and probably was now, one of the most unpopular men in the State. The best man in the world might, without sufficient cause, become unpopular; and an unpopular general manager could not reign with credit to himself or with advantage to the State; for confidence in him was undermined, and no matter what he might do, his efforts would be fruitless. Rightly or wrongly, Mr. Davies was an unpopular man; mud had been thrown at him; while his unpopularity subsisted, his energies for good would be considerably weakened; and were he to retain his present position, his best efforts would be of no avail. Therefore, while he (Mr. Purkiss) was pleased to know the Government were reinstating Mr. Davies, it was no less pleasing to learn that he desired to retire at the end of the financial year.

MR. NANSON: Had Mr. Davies been reinstated?

MR. PURKISS: Practically reinstated, seeing that the Committee were asked to

vote his salary of £1,500 for this year. The only remaining question was, what was fair compensation? The sum of £500 was insufficient, and he (Mr. Purkiss) agreed with Mr. Piesse that £1,500 would not be too much.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS: The position was clear. Certain charges had been laid against Mr. Davies, who had demanded an inquiry. The board dealt with the charges, which had not been proved. On the other hand, by that board Mr. Davies had not been exonerated. A while ago it seemed to be the province of the Government to "bury Cæsar, not to praise him;" and truly, the proposition submitted to-night was most liberal; for if, as some members contended, Mr. Davies were entitled to be reinstated and to receive two years' salary and the credentials mentioned by those members, he was manifestly entitled to be restored to his position of General Manager, and kept there. It had been suggested that this was not a party question, and that it might be submitted to a select committee chosen from both sides of the House. That would still be a party body. Now that the Government had made this announcement, he (Mr. Hopkins) would not criticise it; but if the proposition were not accepted by hon. members opposite, it would be preferable for the Government to withdraw their offer, submit the matter to a Judge of the Supreme Court, giving him the report of the board of inquiry and the evidence, and asking him to say whether Mr. Davies was entitled to compensation, and if so, to fix the amount. If Mr. Davies were wise, he would accept the offer without farther question.

MR. W. B. GORDON: To take his new seat in the Chamber (on Government cross-benches) gave him great pleasure. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Oh, oh!] The action of the Opposition, with whom he had recently been sitting, appeared to him very unfair. Evidently the professed friends of Mr. John Davies were doing him more injury than the Government, by unnecessarily ventilating this question once more. The offer of the Government was fairly put forward, and the Opposition should have considered the proposal without recommencing an acrimonious discussion. The present was a time for proceeding with the business of

the country, and not for reopening questions already settled; but the Opposition were afraid to go before the electors.

[OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Oh, oh!] They were afraid to do either one thing or the other; consequently he (Mr. Gordon) had made up his mind to stand by the Government and to see them into recess, with the object of farthering the interests of the country.

MR. S. C. PIGOTT: One thing that had dropped from the Premier seemed to satisfy him and most people that the hon. gentleman was quite competent to take this responsibility on himself. The Premier ought to settle the question once and for all, and that being so he hoped he might be allowed to move that Item 21 be taken into consideration.

MEMBERS: No. 9.

MR. S. C. PIGOTT: The member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) had made a nice suggestion. One did not know whether he wished to give assistance to the Government in any way. It was suggested that the Government should refer the matter to a Supreme Court Judge. Why should the question be brought into the House at all?

MR. HOPKINS: Then why discuss it?

MR. PIGOTT said he had been the first to object to discussion.

MR. HOPKINS: And the hon. member was carrying it on.

MR. PIGOTT: As far as Mr. Davies was concerned, he did not care a rap whether Mr. Davies got £500 or £5,000; but one must object to any Government, when a question should be decided by them within their own rights, refusing to take the responsibility of such decision. If this question were put before the House to-night and a decision arrived at, and Mr. Davies was to get £2,000, members could say to a certain section of the community, "We treated your man well; we discharged him, but we gave him great compensation, and we will do the same to you if such a case occurs." On the other hand they could say to the community, "We did not want to waste the Government money. We wanted to do the best we could to save expense. We could have got rid of the man for £500, but we would not do it." It was an unfair position for any Government to take up, and he was ashamed to see so

many members backing up the Government.

THE PREMIER: Would the hon. member explain what he was ashamed of?

MR. PIGOTT: That had been stated by him, and the Premier understood it better than any other man in the House.

THE PREMIER: Then it must be the hon. member's method of putting it.

MR. PIGOTT: It might be, but the Premier understood it, if no one else did. If this question was to be gone on with, he did not see how any definite result was to be arrived at. We could not possibly decide what remuneration this man was to get. Every member could express his own opinion, and that would be the end of it. The Cabinet could then reconsider their decision, which he understood from the Minister for Railways a while ago was a final decision. The Minister for Railways distinctly gave the Committee to understand it was definite, but that decision could be revoked now simply because the Government were afraid to act on it. He never before heard of one member of a Cabinet getting up and saying the Government came to a definite decision, and five minutes afterwards another member of the Cabinet getting up and repudiating the statement. It would be better to drop the subject, and let the Cabinet do their work themselves.

MR. J. EWING: The member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott) seemed desirous of occupying the floor of the House, and objecting to other members expressing their opinions. He did not agree with the hon. member that the Government were not acting rightly in taking the Committee into their confidence on this question. They were taking the right course, unless they meant to make a party question of it. From the remarks of the member for the Murray (Mr. George) and the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piessé), he did not think there was the slightest desire on the part of those members to make the question a party one, all they desired being to see justice done and Mr. Davies fairly treated. In his opinion such remarks could not be applied to the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) or to the member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby). The latter had refused to give an opinion, and that was a pity, as his

opinion might have been a guide to the House.

MR. JACOBY : The hon. member wanted some one to tell him what to do every time.

MR. EWING : The suggestion by the member for Perth (Mr. Purkiss) was to the point. There was no question that the reappointment of Mr. Davies permanently would be most unsatisfactory, and that Mr. Davies was unpopular in the service, rightly or wrongly. In the interests of the State it was right that he should not take charge of these railways again. However, the Government intended to reinstate him, and if they did so he could go to other countries with an unblemished reputation. Mr. Davies was practically receiving £1,250, for he was to be paid his salary up to June, and £500 in addition. The Government might perhaps extend that a little, and he would be glad if they could see their way to give him at least £1,000 over and above his salary up to June. The object of the Government in bringing the matter before the Committee was to get an expression of opinion from members, and it was quite possible that when they brought down the Loan Estimates the amount might be increased. He believed that would be done if the Committee wished the Government to take the step. The Government were perfectly right in making this a non-party question.

MR. H. DAGLISH : Unlike the member for West Kimberley, he did not intend to speak at length. In his opinion the question was one that should be settled really on its legal aspect. When he asked the Premier what legal claim the General Manager of Railways had, it was because it was frequently the custom in Government departments, when officers were retired, to deal with them from a legal point of view. Mr. Davies should receive precisely what he had a legal claim to, but no more and no less. If we dealt with him on that basis, we should be acting justly by him and by the State. If he was thoroughly fit to control our railways, there could be no objection to his resuming control, but, if not, he did not see why we wanted to pay him a large sum of money. He knew by the announcement made by the Minister for Railways that there was no hope of carrying this view into effect, but that was the only way to act justly by both parties.

MR. NANSON : The member for the South-West Mining District expressed the view that every member of the Committee should give an opinion on this question. He was at one with him on that point. He had been endeavouring all along to impress upon members that they could express an opinion in the most valuable manner by going into the division lobby. He did not care whether the Government should accept the full responsibility of their actions, or whether they should endeavour to put some of that responsibility on the shoulders of the House. But he cared very much whether every member cast his vote on the question of the amount of compensation that should be awarded to Mr. Davies. One way in which that might be done was by proposing in the Supplementary Estimates a larger amount for Mr. Davies than anyone was likely to offer, and then we could begin the process of whittling down until we arrived at what the Committee considered equitable, and could vote on it.

MR. GEORGE : How long would that take ?

MR. NANSON : It would take a certain time, but nothing like the time this discussion was taking, because this might go on all night and all next day. Apparently there were no means of arriving at a definite conclusion, and he did not believe the Premier was a bit wiser as to the real opinion of the Committee than when the debate started.

THE PREMIER : Oh, yes.

MR. NANSON : It was stated by the member for Perth (Mr. Purkiss), and indorsed by the Government, that Mr. Davies was to be reinstated without any conditions. One would like a legal opinion from the Premier as to the position that would place Mr. Davies in.

MR. JAMES : The Premier could not answer legal questions.

MR. NANSON : As Attorney General, the hon. gentleman could do so. If he could not do so, or did not wish to, the matter could be put before the House, and each member could give his own opinion. In Part 5 of the Public Service Act, dealing with the removal of officers, we were told that one might be removed if reported guilty of conduct rendering him unfit to remain in the service. He might be suspended. Mr. Davies had

been suspended, and if the Government reinstated him absolutely without any condition as to what was to be done with him in the future, surely they admitted that he had been exonerated by the inquiry, and he was then in a position, if he refused to go, to demand another inquiry upon this matter *ad infinitum*, or else to screw much better terms out of the Government. One understood the Government would have to negotiate with Mr. Davies in some way, and ask him whether, in the event of his being reinstated, he was prepared to leave the service on certain conditions. It must be confessed that one viewed with some alarm, which might be groundless, the idea of reinstating Mr. Davies, and afterwards bringing up the question of what was to be done with him; and if that was the intention of the Government as had been admitted, why was this discussion sprung on the Committee now? The discussion might drag on and on, and at the end we might be just where we started. Surely it was possible for the Premier to move a motion, or perhaps an address to the Governor, that a certain sum be placed on the Supplementary Estimates to be paid to Mr. John Davies on his retirement from the position of General Manager of Railways.

THE PREMIER said he did not want anybody to move that. He would do that himself, if necessary.

MR. NANSON: That course was suggested on the assumption that the Premier wanted an expression of opinion from the Committee. If the amount proposed was not considered sufficient, means could be taken on that motion of indicating clearly to the Government what members of the House desired, and a vote could be taken as to what was the opinion of members. The present course was altogether unbusinesslike.

THE PREMIER: After what had been said by hon. members, he was satisfied that he would be able to gauge the opinion of the House, and he thought sufficient opinions had been expressed to guide him in what he wished to do. His intention was to consider this question with his colleagues, and make certain recommendations, the result of which would appear on the Supplementary Estimates, which would be brought down in two or three days.

MR. JACOBY: The Committee had been told it was all decided in Cabinet already.

THE PREMIER: If the member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby) and the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) had succeeded in tying themselves in legal knots, he was not inclined to assist in unravelling them. He was not going to give a legal opinion on the point which the member for the Murchison had put to him. He was perfectly satisfied with the result of the discussion. If it went much farther, we might hear the remark from Mr. Davies, "Oh, save me from my friends." That was what he (the Premier) had desired from the first to avoid. He would like to remind the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) that the effect of his argument was really to condemn the system absolutely of giving gratuities; and if we were in all cases simply to decide upon the legal grounds, then the duties of Ministers would be made easy. Legally, nobody was entitled to demand sums which appeared on the Estimates. All these grants were a favour from the people through the Ministers, who were their representatives; so that it was idle to taunt Ministers with trying to shelter themselves behind the opinion of Parliament. He did not want to stir up old history. Ministers had not shown they were afraid of the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott), up to date. He was not conscious of it. If he had been, he would apologise. Hon. members had applied to him and asked him if he could provide money for this person or for the other in the form of a gratuity; therefore do not let us be misled by the argument of the member for Subiaco, in assuming that we must in all these cases take a hard-and-fast position.

MR. DAGLISH: Unless there were meritorious services.

THE PREMIER: The question resolved itself into a gratuity and the amount which was to be offered. He would make a distinct offer in the Supplementary Estimates, and it would be the privilege of hon. members, if they thought there was too much liberality in the proposal, to cut down the amount. Having told the House that he was satisfied with the expression of opinion which members had given, we might now proceed to consider the other items in these Estimates; that was assuming no

member desire to reduce the vote for Railways by any substantial sum.

MR. NANSON: As to the stand taken by himself and other members, he could not accept the Premier's statement that they would be doing Mr. Davies an injury. He did not know Mr. Davies in the slightest, and he was considering only what was best in the interests of the country. Friendship should not come into this matter at all. He was sorry to think that to some extent personal friendship had come into it.

MR. TAYLOR: After the strong position he had taken on this matter when it was discussed in the House on a previous occasion, and having made that strong statement after reading the report of the board of inquiry, he must repeat now what he said then, that he was satisfied from the report there was sufficient ground to warrant the dismissal of John Davies as General Manager of Railways. He had found nothing since to alter that opinion, therefore he would not act here as a number of members had acted, for he had heard members denounce that gentleman when it was a party question before the House, and he had heard some of them to-night urging the claims of John Davies. Members who would say that John Davies ought to be dismissed from the position as General Manager of Railways, and said it at a time when the question was of a party character, but who spoke in a very different style in this discussion, were using it only as a party cry, and such action did not commend itself to his mind. He had heard members of the present Ministry say that had they been Commissioner of Railways—they were Ministers at that time in charge of other departments—they would not have suspended John Davies, but would have dismissed him. That was what he had heard them say; but now he found the Cabinet composed practically of the same members with one exception, and those members said to-night they felt disposed to give John Davies leave of absence, reinstate him in his position as General Manager, and give him £500 as compensation. That was the attitude which members of the Government took up to-night. He spoke now as he spoke before, in saying that if any servant of the State did not do his duty, that servant deserved

dismissal; but he found that because a servant was in a high position, any number of members were ready to defend him in Parliament when it became a party question. It was now proposed to allow John Davies to leave in such a manner as to convey the opinion outside that he had been a faithful servant of this State, and could go forth to seek employment elsewhere as having done his duty here. The Premier evidently thought it would be of some assistance if the suspension were cancelled; and he (Mr. Taylor) believed it would be an assistance for John Davies to have that suspension cancelled, to receive £500 gratuity, and to leave the service, as had been said, with a clean bill of health. If the Government said that was their position, he (Mr. Taylor) would be inclined to fall in with them, and say that time was a great healer and it was necessary to let John Davies down lightly. The Leake Government went out of office because of their action in the case of John Davies; and having stumped the country after that, he was in a position to say their action was upheld, for it was the general opinion that the Commissioner of Railways had acted rightly in suspending John Davies and cleaning up the Railway Department. The return of the present Government to office was a sufficient assurance that John Davies did not get the sympathy outside Parliament which he did inside.

MR. GEORGE: Why not crucify him?

MR. TAYLOR: This was no party question with him. His was straight talk. He did not wish to speak acrimoniously, but believed the Government were competent to deal with the question in Cabinet without coming before Parliament, when it was a matter of only £500 to compensate a servant who had been spoken of by some members as a faithful servant. If the Government had not sufficient confidence in themselves to dismiss that servant, or to reinstate him, or to compensate him, without coming to Parliament, it was want of backbone. The member for the Murray had instanced the Coolgardie Water Scheme as being similar to the proposal to compensate Mr. Davies. [MR. GEORGE: Similar in principle.] Where was the similarity? A great public work was a subject con-

cerning which Parliament should be taken into the confidence of the Ministry; but if Cabinet were not capable of dismissing or otherwise dealing with a civil servant without reference to Parliament, of what use was a Cabinet? Better let Parliament run the country without a Cabinet, if the Cabinet would not accept responsibility for matters of administration. He (Mr. Taylor) would have more to say when on the Supplementary Estimates, and would not vote for any increase in the compensation, but would rather diminish the amount.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: Regarding the remarks of the member for the Murray, who had blamed the Government for delay in dealing with Mr. Davies—(MR. GEORGE: No)—it was sufficient to say that as soon as the report of the John Davies inquiry board was laid upon the table, the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) moved his no-confidence motion. In fact the hon. member had waited that evening until the report had been laid on the table, and then moved his motion, with the result that the first Leake Government could not act in the matter. Had the Government been allowed to remain in office, Mr. Davies would have been dealt with during the following week. But Mr. Piesse, after having protected John Davies in every way, came to his rescue with a no-confidence motion, and the hands of the Government were tied. Then the Government resigned. The member for the Williams and the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) each formed short-lived Ministries, which could not do anything concerning Mr. Davies; nor could the present Government, until last week, when the present Minister for Railways had been re-elected by his constituents. Then came the first opportunity of dealing with the affair. Any delay was due to members of the Opposition, and not to anyone on the Government side. Regarding Mr. Davies's remuneration since his suspension, he had already received five months pay, £625. It was proposed to give him five months' leave on full salary, which would amount to another £625, making £1,250; and the Government proposed to supplement that sum with £500; so that Mr. Davies would receive in all £1,750 since his suspension.

MR. GEORGE: He had earned £625 by being suspended.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: As to the Government asking the House to assist in matters of administration, the Minister for Railways had announced to-night that the Cabinet had decided on a certain line of action; and certainly Cabinet should be prepared to back up that action—(OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.)—and should not consult the House on matters of administration.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That sort of thing was done by every Government.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: To consult the House on the Coolgardie Water Scheme was altogether different, for that was a question of policy, whether the Government should continue the policy of departmental construction or return to the system of construction by contract. This was, however, a question of administration, on which the Cabinet should stand or fall. He (Mr. Holmes) had been Commissioner of Railways for six months; and he defied any man to challenge one of his decisions, or to show that he had acted otherwise than for the benefit of the whole community instead of for any particular section. Whoever administered the Railway Department would find the department required cleaning up. There were many other officers whom it would pay to get rid of by a gift of a few hundred pounds.

MR. W. F. SAYER: In view of the report of the board of inquiry, the Government were taking the only proper course in cancelling the suspension, and restoring Mr. Davies to his position. The effect of the board's report was to exonerate Mr. Davies from any charge that could be deemed sufficient to warrant his dismissal; but in cancelling the suspension and restoring Mr. Davies—if that were part of a scheme for the retirement of Mr. Davies—the Government should be seized of the fact that there should be an agreement or understanding that Mr. Davies should retire at the end of the year; otherwise it might be impossible to retire him without his consent. Under the Public Service Act, it was not possible to remove an individual public servant unless on the abolition of office or by a reduction affecting generally the public service, recommended by the Governor and approved

by Parliament. In default of such understanding, Mr. Davies, being re-appointed, could be removed only by going through the process of reporting him guilty of some subsequent alleged misconduct, and suspending him after farther inquiry.

THE PREMIER : That had been considered.

MR. SAYER : Mr. Davies should be reinstated ; and if his reinstatement were part of a scheme for his retirement, and he were retired on fair and reasonable terms, then the whole matter would be satisfactorily settled.

MR. NANSON : The Committee had now a legal opinion on the question, and the Government had admitted that they had decided to restore Mr. Davies and remove his suspension absolutely without conditions. Was that right? [**MEMBERS :** Yes.] Though he (Mr. Nanson) had every member against him, he would maintain his position. Though he believed Mr. Davies should be restored, and that terms should be made with him on which he would be prepared to leave the service, he should not be restored until such terms had been absolutely settled. Would any hon. member in his private business cancel, absolutely without conditions, the suspension of an employee, and then start to make terms? Would the Premier say that no conditions had been made, or did he want hon. members and the public to believe that, as business men, Ministers would restore Mr. Davies without conditions?

MR. GEORGE : Discuss this on the Supplementary Estimates.

MR. NANSON : No. Have it settled now.

MR. TAYLOR : Were the Government reinstating Mr. John Davies with the idea that he would ever control the railways of this country, or were they reinstating him only by way of a let-down?

THE PREMIER : On this subject he would not answer any more questions.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS : Hear, hear.

MR. GEORGE : Concerning Item 905—

MR. NANSON : Was it not possible to continue to speak on Item 9?

MR. JAMES : Surely the discussion on that item had gone far enough, in the absence of any specific motion?

MR. NANSON : The discussion had not been commenced by him. He had warned the Premier of the lines the discussion would take.

THE PREMIER : That was all right. The warning had been disregarded.

MR. NANSON : And the Premier was "reaping the whirlwind." The Premier had started with an assumption of the utmost candour; and it was only by chance that the member for Perth (Mr. Purkiss) had said, somewhat unwisely for the Government, that the Government had decided to remove, without conditions, the suspension of Mr. Davies. Yet now when he (Mr. Nanson) tried to get information on this point, concerning which the country would look for information to-morrow morning, all at once the Premier closed down, and would not say anything farther. Now that the discussion had reached a stage in which inconvenient inquiries might be made, there was an evident desire on the part of the Government to bring it to an untimely end.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : In reply to the heated speech of the member who had just sat down, the hon. member might take it for granted that Mr. Davies would not again control the railways. That statement should be a sufficient answer.

MR. NANSON : Then the Minister contradicted the statement that Mr. Davies would be reinstated absolutely, without conditions?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : Mr. Davies had expressed his desire not to re-enter the service.

MR. NANSON : That did not agree with other information, given by the Premier.

THE PREMIER : What was asserted by the Minister for Railways had also been stated by himself.

MR. NANSON : Then that surely established a condition.

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. member must be called to order.

MR. NANSON said he merely wished to point out that we were first told that Mr. Davies was to be reinstated, and we were now told by the Minister for Railways that he had to retire from the service.

THE PREMIER : Nothing of the kind.

Item—Inspector of Bush Fires (four months at £200 per annum), £66 13s. 4d.:

MR. W. J. GEORGE: Presumably the duties of this officer would be to protect people against bush fires. Money had been spent last year, but not voted.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The duties of this officer were as presumed by the hon. member, and it had been decided to retain his services for four months.

Item—Chief Mechanical Engineer's Branch, Foreman, £260:

MR. GEORGE: The amount had been reduced from £275 to £260, and it was rather rough on a man to have his salary reduced by £15.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The officer was, he took it, a new man. A start in the scheme of classification had been made in the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department, and of course the men who went on newly did not get the same salary as the old hands, who had risen.

Item—Chief Engineer of Existing Lines, £800:

MR. M. H. JACOBY: We had here a branch that was able for a long time to get along successfully with the Chief Engineer of Existing Lines. That officer found it necessary to have a holiday, and another temporarily occupied the position. When the chief engineer returned, this officer still retained his position in the office. This had also occurred in one or two other departments in the public service. As the work in this department had now, he believed, considerably decreased, some economy could be effected. A matter he would like to refer to in connection with this department was that Mr. Light had been removed as acting engineer for existing lines, and one of the engineers originally in the chief office was transferred to take charge of the resident engineer's department. That officer had been doing the responsible work of resident engineer for two years or more, and he only received the salary that he obtained in his former position, when junior engineer in the chief office. This was, he believed, one of many similar anomalies which obtained in the Govern-

ment service. He drew attention to that so that when the scheme of reorganisation took place the matter would not be overlooked.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member did not want an explanation, did he?

MR. JACOBY: No.

Item—Temporary Clerical Assistance, wages of packers:

MR. J. B. HOLMAN: At the present time we found men engaged on the gold-fields temporarily, receiving about 8s. or 9s. per day, whereas the ruling rate of wages for ordinary workmen was from 10s. 10d. to 11s. 8d. These temporary employees should receive the same rate of wages as was paid to other classes of workers. Unless a fair wage was paid, a good deal of damage was done, because persons of no experience were engaged, and they did not know how to handle the goods. If the men on the railway only received a certain amount of wages, it had a tendency to lower the wages of others.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Inquiries would be made, but in the present state of affairs he was afraid circumstances were not such as would justify his incurring the extra expenditure asked for.

Item—Contingencies, Rebuilding Wagon Stock, £28,140:

MR. W. J. GEORGE: This item and the next (replacing obsolete engines, £22,900) made a total of £51,000.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: £51,040.

MR. GEORGE: The item for repairs was, he believed, a new one, and the Minister would probably be glad to have an opportunity of giving an expression of opinion with reference to the two items. Personally he agreed with the proposal. He always thought that repairs should be borne out of the profits of the year in which the repairs were made. That could not very well be done as far as Government expenditure was concerned, but we could make one year pay for the repairs done in the previous year. He would be glad to know how many wagons would be rebuilt for the £28,000, and with regard to obsolete engines he would like to know what they were.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:

The item referred to was, in his opinion, a step in the right direction. He could not claim credit for it, for he believed the Hon. Mr. Holmes was the first to initiate this. It had been decided to replace, not so much to repair as the hon. member said, old worn-out stock from revenue instead of charging the whole of these replacements up to capital account. The bulk of the money went in absolutely replacing wagons, some of which were on the books, but were not in existence, having been destroyed by fire and all that sort of thing. With regard to the engines on the Estimates, the amount was only half what it was proposed to spend upon replacing engines. The other half would be spent next year. It was proposed to purchase further Baldwin engines with the £22,900. It was not considered absolutely necessary to replace truck for truck, but to obtain wagon stock of a description of the greatest value.

Item—Cossack and Roebourne Tramway, materials and incidental expenses, £500:

MR. J. M. HOPKINS: The expenditure last year was £145 19s. 6d., whereas this year the Government asked for £500, which seemed excessive.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:

It was evidently expected, having had fairly good luck during the last few years, that a willy-willy would come along, so the amount for incidental expenses had been increased. Arrangements were now being made for the control of this tramway to be placed in the hands of individuals on the spot, and this was justified by its isolated position.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

This concluded the Railway Estimates.

MINES DEPARTMENT (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Mines, £103,869 18s. 4d.:

MR. G. TAYLOR: The amount for public batteries was something under £40,000, and he was sorry it could not be increased. He wished to speak on the necessity for public batteries, and the claims of certain districts which he would bring under the notice of the Committee.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The Loan Estimates would supply what the hon. member wanted.

MR. TAYLOR: That being so, he would not occupy the time of the Committee at this stage.

MR. J. GARDINER: Referring again to the question of the cost of printing departmental reports he must point particularly to the annual report issued by the Mines Department, which must have cost £500 or £600 at least for printing. He did hope that now we had a Minister who was going in for reform in other than large matters, and would give attention to small ones, this would be the last of the expensive reports issued by this department. Besides some statistical information, it contained illustrations of anything from blackfellows' graves up to public houses. Reports got up in this way cost large sums for printing the illustrations, and were of no practical use. Copies of correspondence should not be included in a report of this kind. The annual report of a department should be for practical use, in a condensed form. The only report amongst those of other departments which was really condensed in useful form was that issued by the Collector of Customs, and one hoped that Ministers generally would take the stand that if reports of a voluminous and unnecessarily expensive kind were produced again, the officers responsible should understand that the penalty would be severe. The last report issued from the Observatory, for instance, cost £295 for printing. No wonder the Printing Department came under the strictures of this House when such expensive work was required by the other departments.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member would be aware that the report of the Mines Department to which he referred was prepared practically before he (Mr. Gregory) came into office. Doubtless there was some unnecessary expense, but the report also contained a lot of statistical information which would be of use to persons interested in mining in this State. It was advisable that the annual report should be in such a form as to give useful and interesting information to persons outside, as well as in the State, interested in mining. The desire of the department was simply to show the

progress which mining was making in this country, and the great wealth in our mines.

Item—State Mining Engineer, eight months (at £600), £400 :

MR. GEORGE asked for information, this being a new appointment.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: This was a new office, but the appointment was not yet made. A State Mining Engineer was necessary to be the chief mining adviser to the Minister. Public batteries had been erected in all parts of the goldfields, and if a report on any of them were required, the Superintendent of Batteries had to be sent out, thereby being taken away from the work of his office, where his work chiefly lay. In many cases large sums had been expended in an absolutely useless manner. The Superintendent of Public Batteries had not the mining knowledge to enable him to be a general adviser to the Minister on mining questions. If this item were passed by the Committee, he intended to give the new officer, when appointed, full outside control of all the public batteries, and he hoped this would check such losses as had occurred in the past through the erection and working of public batteries. To show that an improvement was being effected in the department generally in regard to these batteries, he informed the Committee that the working of public batteries during the first six months of last year resulted in a loss of some £3,000, while the result of the last six months was a profit of about £2,000. As to the inspection of mines, there was a large number of inspectors appointed, and each one had been in the habit of carrying out his duties as he thought best. It was necessary to have some one in control of the inspection of mines throughout the State, in order to obtain a uniform system; and unless a highly qualified man were appointed to the position, it would be impossible to get uniformity of system. The proposed officer would be able to superintend the boring for water that might be advised by the Mines Department. The only fear was that a sufficiently qualified man might not be obtainable at £600 a year. In New South Wales the chief inspector of mines received £750 a year, and the chief inspector of collieries, £800; in South

Australia the inspector of mining and boring received £450 a year; and in Tasmania the chief inspector of mines received £500 a year. It was to be hoped that a reasonably good man might be obtained at the price set down in the Estimates, and if he were a really qualified man he would be a great addition to the Mines Department.

DR. O'CONNOR: Would he be allowed travelling expenses also?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Under the regulations, he would be entitled to 17s. 9d. a day for travelling expenses.

Item—Mining Registrar, Mr. Mortimer, Ashburton Goldfield, £280 :

MR. GEORGE: Taking this as a sample of similar items, he asked whether it was not practicable to combine some of the districts which were not so largely populated now as formerly; also to transfer wardens from one or other district where there was less work now than formerly, and place these officers in districts which had developed more recently or had greatly increased in population. The facilities for travelling were now much better than formerly, and this was an additional reason for making a rearrangement of districts for wardens and registrars.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Had there not been some difficulty in making rearrangements such as the hon. member suggested, there would not now be a warden at Southern Cross. The warden at Coolgardie could do the work and save about £1,000 a year by attending to the two places. He (the Minister) had been negotiating to induce one warden to resign, but that officer having been in the service ten years, he could not be expected to resign without some recognition. He (the Minister) had requested the Kanowna warden to take charge of the work at Broad Arrow in addition to that of Kanowna, for the purpose of shifting the other man down to Southern Cross. If a magistracy or wardenship could be found for him, the officer at Southern Cross might be transferred to it. When these gentlemen got a good salary, they should be compelled to do the work for the money they received; and he intended, as Minister, to make them do it.

MR. TAYLOR: Big salaries did not always involve hard work.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: But the Government intended to get the work done. He would confer with the Premier on this matter, and hoped to be able to enlarge some of the districts and reduce the number of the wardens and the expenses of the department.

MR. WALLACE: The Minister felt a difficulty in dismissing without compensation wardens who had served the State for a number of years. If the Minister had taken charge of a private business, would he hesitate to dismiss an inefficient man for whom there was no use? The member for Boulder, in his anxiety to get a magistrate for that town, should not accept too readily a discharged warden. In the early days, some altogether unqualified wardens had been appointed.

MR. HOPKINS: Were there more wardens than there was work for? If so, employment might be found for them as mining registrars; and if the wardens would not accept such positions, the Public Service Act should be amended to permit of their being dispensed with on reasonable compensation being given.

Item—Warden, Coolgardie, £750 :

DR. O'CONNOR asked for explanation.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: This warden received £750 and £150 goldfields allowance. In next year's Estimates, all these salaries and allowances would be shown together. Some time ago he had discovered that some wardens were drawing water supply from two departments. That practice he had stopped. Mr. Wittenoom, when Minister, had given them permission to do what they liked with the water. A warden should receive a certain salary, and in default of quarters he should have lodging allowance. The Mines Department was treated unfairly in the matter of expenses, some officers being paid more than Parliament intended. A mining registrar in a district was frequently made clerk of courts at £50 a year, and then perhaps electoral registrar or returning officer. Next it was found impossible for him to do the work of mining registrar, and an assistant at, say, £200 a year, had to be provided by the department. A better classification was required. The

gross remuneration received by each officer should appear on the Estimates.

Item—Inspector of Mines, Murchison, £350 :

MR. J. B. HOLMAN: An assistant should be appointed. In the Murchison district there were about 25 centres, and every year the inspector had to visit those centres, travelling over 6,000 miles, generally in a buggy. Recently, in his absence, two fatal accidents had occurred at Day Dawn and Peak Hill respectively, yet the inspection provided by the Mines Regulation Act could not take place. The official was also inspector of boilers, and examined engine-drivers for certificates. He was a most hard-working and painstaking officer, and his salary, even with travelling allowances, was altogether insufficient.

MR. TAYLOR: Though it was unwise to eulogise Government servants, he must say there was no more efficient mining and boiling inspector in this State, and the salary of £350, considering the size of the district and the numerous centres, was inadequate.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: There was £40 as inspector of boilers. In reply to Mr. Holman, it was impossible for an inspector to be both inspector of mines and of boilers in such large districts. As inspector of boilers, he had to give notice in advance to the mines of his approach; but as inspector of mines he should arrive without notice, whereas the mines were specially prepared for his visits. Two items had been placed on the Supplementary Estimates for inspectors of boilers, one for this Murchison district, and one for the Menzies-Mt. Magnet district. Whether these officers should be permanent was in the discretion of Parliament.

MR. F. C. MONGER intimated he would move for recommitment of the Mines Estimates (later), in order to refer to Item 2, State Mining Engineer (8 months at £600), £400.

MR. WALLACE: Why was it that an inspector of mines in one place, say at Coolgardie, was paid £420, while an inspector of mines at the Murchison received £350? They had to possess similar qualifications, no matter what district they were in.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: This was one of the matters which could only

be remedied by classification. There should be a classification of these officers. When they entered the service they should receive the minimum salary, and know exactly the maximum.

MR. WALLACE : When men were put into the position of inspectors of mines, they should be just as qualified then as afterwards.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : They were judged in the first year or two.

MR. WALLACE : Presumably the qualifications were ascertained before the inspectors were appointed.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS : An inspector of mines taking up the duties, and starting at £250 a year, would be pleased to know he could rise to £400 by years of good work in the department.

Item—Clerk and Inspector Mines, £25 :

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. F. Illingworth) moved that the word "and" be struck out, and "to" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Item—Public Batteries, superintendent, £425 :

MR. A. E. THOMAS : The Minister for Mines was, he was thoroughly satisfied, trying to do his utmost to reform his department and put the public batteries of the State on a sound commercial basis. It was time that was done. We had seen that the public battery at Norseman had been showing repeated losses. A board of inquiry was appointed, and the result showed that the cost of working was apparently 26s. 6d. per ton, and, if we included repairs and renewals of plant, £2 1s. 6d. per ton. The information went throughout the country, and the prospectors were blamed for it. He had spent some time in going over the battery. The whole thing in connection with the battery had been messed from start to finish through the purchase of the original rattle-trap battery, not fit for the work it had to do, and the patchwork put into it, so that it became impossible to work the battery at a profit at 15s. per ton, which was charged at other batteries in the district. There were 35 leases in that district now raising stone for the public battery, and he estimated that there were over 1,500 tons of ore now awaiting treatment. The people there

were labouring under every difficulty at the present time. The battery was hung up, for how long he did not know, but the Minister was trying his utmost to put it to work as soon as possible. The whole blame in connection with the battery had to lie in the Public Batteries Branch of the Mines Department.

Item—General supplies and maintenance, £15,000 :

MR. HOLMAN : A certain amount was always charged to each battery for maintenance; generally from 4s. to 6s. per ton. He would like to see the item of maintenance specified. As to public batteries, he considered that every public battery that could be kept going should have a cyanide plant. In a great many places, especially where the stuff was of low grade, as much gold went away in the sand as was saved. Doubtless the Minister for Mines had done everything possible. If the system of public batteries could be extended more widely than at the present time, every possible effort should be made to introduce them throughout the whole district where necessary, and before their erection there should be inquiry to see that they were necessary. Public batteries made work for hundreds, and were not only of benefit to prospectors but to the whole State. There were complaints that when requests were made for certain information, that information could not be obtained. He himself made inquiry by letter regarding one or two batteries and could not get the information asked for. It was information that could be supplied to anyone, such as how many tons of stone had been crushed or if they had sufficient water. Managers of batteries should be allowed to give information. We saw that private batteries crushed for 13s. and public batteries could be worked on a better system than even private batteries at the present time.

MR. THOMAS : Did maintenance include anything for depreciation?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : There was no item yet for depreciation. We never allowed for any depreciation in regard to these batteries. The loss on working the batteries was about £15,000. With regard to Norseman, a second-hand battery was purchased in opposition to the recommendation of the superintendent of public batteries, and

the present state of affairs there had resulted from the purchase of that battery. He had given instructions that everything necessary for placing the battery on a proper working footing must be done at once, and he thought that within the next few months the battery would be in an efficient condition. If the manager could not make it a success after it was placed in proper order, there would be a change. In regard to the question of general supplies and maintenance, quite a new system was being initiated, that being, that when all these supplies were ordered in future the invoices would have to go to the battery managers, who would know what they cost. Tenders were now being called for these things, and with care he thought we should be able to make the system a good one. With regard to the purchase of tailings, £5,000 would have to be recouped to the Treasury. He had issued new regulations, by which he believed it would be possible to insure to the prospector every ounce of gold he sent to the mill, and at the same time protect the department against loss. He felt satisfied that in a short time we should be able to place in any district where the assays proved the tailings to be worth treating, a cyanide plant in connection with the public battery. At Makatarra, for instance, there was only sufficient water to run a battery two shifts, and the assay proved that the tailings were not sufficient to pay for a cyanide plant. Any business man who put up a battery would need to put up a cyanide plant, and wherever the tailings warranted the erection of cyanide plants in connection with public batteries, every facility would be given for treating the tailings and insuring to the prospector the fullest return. As to the complaint of not being able to get information, he could assure hon members he was only too pleased to give any information which it was in his power to give. A new departure had been made in the appointing of an advisory board in places where the management had been unsatisfactory. One member of such board was to be nominated by the Government, the other two members to be elected by the leaseholders who supplied stone to the battery. These would be advisory boards at first, without much power, but they would be an element in assisting to control the

working of batteries, and be useful to the Minister. He intended to have advisory boards appointed in many places.

MR. A. E. THOMAS: Referring to the battery at Norseman, of which much had been heard during the last six months, the cost of crushing was 26s. 6d. a ton. At the privately-owned battery he was managing the charge for the public was 12s. 6d., the owners making a profit at that. The actual cost amounted from 7s. 6d. to 8s. a ton for working a 20-head mill. If private individuals could crush for that amount, then, allowing an ample margin to the Government for cleaning up small parcels, they ought to be able to work public batteries generally at a profit for less than 15s. per ton; and every shilling of reduction in the cost of crushing meant that more stone would be milled and more prospectors be on shows that must otherwise be abandoned. If the Ministry would send an independent mining man into the Norseman district, he would agree with him the best thing to do would be to stop that rattle-trap mill and have a 15-head or 20-head mill erected, which could crush at 8s. to 10s. per ton for the public, with the result that many more shows would be working than it was possible to work at the present price of crushing at that public battery.

MR. WALLACE: The remarks of the member for Dundas were of a practical character, and deserved the attention of the Committee. He was glad to hear the cost of running the mill managed by the hon. member was so low as compared with that charged by the Government, and it showed the wisdom of working large mills instead of small ones. He understood the success of Norseman depended on the price charged for milling and on the facilities for getting stone to the mill. There were districts which were condemned through the public batteries proving the stone not to be good enough, at eight and ten pennyweight shows. The question of a sliding scale came up; and if the Minister, to help a district, would work the batteries on a scale which would enable prospectors to keep on with their shows, it would be better to do this, even at a little loss to the department. When the public battery system was inaugurated, it was not the intention of Parliament, as

he understood, that each battery should necessarily be made to pay ; but the intention was to erect these batteries for assisting in the development of districts, and to help the smaller prospector by providing means to crush their stone. We now found, however, that the public batteries were being run on strictly commercial lines, so that if a show was a weight, or half a weight too low, it would have to be set aside as not good enough ; consequently districts which were now looked upon hopefully would have to be condemned if this system were continued. As to cyanide, one would like to know the lowest cost of working.

MR. THOMAS: Four shillings a ton, or 3s. 6d. to make sure.

MR. WALLACE: The Government charged 10s. as being necessary to make the process pay. Sooner than tell a prospector the stone he was supplying would not pay for cyaniding the tailings, it would be better for the department to lose a little and enable the prospector to get something out of his tailings. It was not a good system to insist on a certain price, and let the prospector take what was left, for this practically would be no assistance in some districts. The Minister had issued new regulations lately, and it was to be hoped they would assist the poor man to to the same extent as the rich man was assisted. One would sooner see the Mines Department working these batteries at a small loss than accumulating a profit.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Without a reduction in price?

MR. WALLACE said he was sorry the Minister had raised the question of price, for there was plenty of room to come down in the price for working public batteries. The department should be a little more liberal to prospectors than hitherto.

MR. HASTIE: The Minister for Mines had got so much good advice this evening that one hesitated to give him more to remember. As to the price of cyaniding, one Ministerial supporter seemed to think the Minister charged two or three times the fair price. In the Boulder district many private batteries crushed stone for the public and bought the cyanide ; but in no instance did they charge less than public batteries. Some members seemed to think that cyanide plants should in all circumstances be erected, and that they would always pay.

In some of the best districts such plants would not pay ; for much of the stone crushed would not pay to cyanide. If a public battery did not pay expenses, it had better be at once closed down.—[MR. THOMAS: Nonsense!]—There might be cases in which it was desirable to put down a battery for a preliminary test ; but it was too much that established batteries should be a constant burden on the State. The main reason why batteries did not pay was because, after some good crushings, the leases supplying the stone were kept idle in expectation of a boom.

MR. TAYLOR: Possibly, in Kanowna.

MR. HASTIE: There was no public battery in Kanowna. Many batteries were not supplied with stone. A minimum should be fixed, and the proposed advisory board should understand that if the minimum quantity were not forthcoming, the battery would be removed.

MR. THOMAS: Supposing it were a bad battery.

MR. HASTIE: If the Government had bought a second-hand battery, and had not succeeded in having satisfactory repairs made, as was alleged to have happened at Norseman, such battery had better be sold to the hon. member interjecting, and let the Government lease an efficient battery on fair terms.

MR. TAYLOR disagreed with the last speaker. The public battery system was not inaugurated with the idea that each battery should pay working expenses. It was sufficient that the system paid as a whole. In his district there were places starving for want of a battery. Wherever there was a public battery on a new field, or on a new line of reef, the battery should treat, without a deposit, the stone which prospectors were willing to raise. Prospectors were intolerably hampered by demands from private batteries for deposits.

MR. HOLMAN: That cyanide plants should be erected everywhere he had not maintained ; for to erect them in districts where there was even a little copper in the stone would be useless, as that metal nullified the effect of the cyanide. The results of the treatment at Megarthella showed it was absolutely necessary that a cyanide plant should be erected there.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Over £300,000 had been distributed amongst prospectors on goldfields since public

batteries had been initiated; yet he had been accused of adopting a cheese-paring policy because he had made the batteries pay. In no instance had he raised the price for crushing, but had reduced it from 17s. 6d. to 15s., and in remote districts from £1 to 18s. Nor had any battery been closed down while there was stone to crush; but every care was taken to see that the State was not robbed in the purchase of tailings, and that all the gold was distributed to customers. It was said the batteries should crush low-grade ore at a lower rate than high grade; but a person working low-grade ore worked on a big lode; and 10dwt. stone might therefore pay better than 2oz. stone. It was hard to say who would find it most payable, the man with a big lode who could take out low-grade ore easily or the man who spent a large amount of money in taking out higher grade ore; so he thought the sliding scale would hardly be a good thing. He had indicated that in no case had the Government increased the charges, but they had reduced them, yet they had shown a profit, which meant that, if we could continue working in this manner, the whole of these charges would be reduced, and the prospectors would be able to obtain the advantage. The Government had no desire to make any profit out of this. In many cases it was recognised that this would be a good thing, even if we lost a small amount of money; and if we covered expenses we should, in his opinion, be satisfied. In what way would he have been treated if he had shown a loss of £3,000 or £4,000?

MR. WALLACE: Common sense would tell every member that when one spoke of low grade in mining, he spoke of it from the value point of view. As to cutting down the price, it had been reduced from £2 to 15s.; but the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) had announced that he could do it at considerably less than the Government. There was a mine in his (Mr. Wallace's) own district where it could be done for less than 13s., he believed. He did not advocate a reduction of the price where the ore could pay it, but where the ore was not sufficiently rich the Government might permit people to pay 15s.

MR. THOMAS: In his own district they had a cyanide plant which cost £3,000, and it was supposed to treat a

fair quantity, but they could go to their own mines and put up a plant for £300 that would do more work. With regard to the batteries not paying, it was purely the fault of the department in a great number of instances. If these prospectors used them, they wanted to have the price reduced, and, if necessary, more stamps put up.

MR. G. TAYLOR: Was one to understand that a private individual could erect a cyanide plant for £300 which was as good as what the Government paid £3,000 for?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It did not cost £3,000.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN: With regard to public batteries, the stuff had to be handled two or three times oftener than in a cheap cyanide plant. The general price for cyaniding at Murchison was a trifle over 6s. a ton. If every convenience was provided, cyaniding could be done at a cheaper rate, but he did not think it could be done at less than 6s. or 7s. in small quantities.

Vote as amended put and passed.

Geological Survey, £4,170—agreed to.

This concluded the annual Estimates.

PAWNBROKERS BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and, on motion by the PREMIER, read a first time.

MOTION—COOLGARDIE WATER SCHEME, PIPE CAULKING, TO APPROVE CONTRACT.

Order read for resuming debate on the motion by the Minister for Public Works.

MR. J. L. NANSON moved that the debate be farther adjourned.

Put and passed, and the debate farther adjourned.

MOTION—LAND GRANTED TO TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL, TO DISAPPROVE.

Order read for resuming the debate on motion moved by Mr. Harper.

MR. R. HASTIE: I have twice asked this House to adjourn the motion, because of the entire absence of all the representatives from Fremantle. There are four

of them in this House, and candidly I do not like the idea of our discussing the motion when not one of them is present. I was asked to-day by one or two of them if this motion would come on, and I have been informed by some that they got an understanding somehow or other that the motion would not be reached to-night. I move the adjournment of the debate.

THE PREMIER: May I suggest that the hon. member make his observations, and then adjourn the debate; or whichever the hon. member likes.

MR. HASTIE: I have moved the adjournment. I have no particular observations to make, except general ones. I think it would be hardly fair to speak in the absence of the Fremantle members.

MR. TAYLOR: They ought to be here. If they do not carry out their duty, it is not our fault.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps the hon. members may be excused, because it was not expected the Estimates would be got through quite so quickly, and I do not desire to press this unless it is the wish of members. Perhaps it will be as well to adjourn.

Debate farther adjourned.

DIVIDEND DUTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas), in moving the second reading, said: It will not require much comment on my part to make the object of the Bill clear to members. In 1899 the Dividend Duty Act Amendment Act was passed in this State, and in Sections 4 and 5 of that Act (I think against the wishes expressed at that time), a mining company was made separate from an ordinary company. I believe the intention at the time of passing the Act was to put all companies on the same footing, but that mining companies carrying on business in outside countries as well as here should not pay duty on the dividends declared, but on the profits. As the Bill reads, a limited liability company, an ordinary company, pays this duty of 1s. in the £ on distributed profits, whereas mining companies have to file returns and pay on book profits. In some cases a good deal of that so-called profit is expended in the development of the mine, and re-sunk

in the mine, and yet we are called upon to pay duty on it. My amending Bill is a very short one, consisting of only four clauses. The second clause is to strike out the words "a mining company or" in Section 4 of the original Act, to put a mining company on the same footing as other limited liability companies. Clause 3 puts the original Clause 5 on the same footing, and Clause 4 is an indemnity clause. Recently, companies have been asked (or at least some of them) to pay immediately, or otherwise have writs to pay a sum which the Treasury consider may possibly be owing under this Act on account of their book profits, and in some cases we know where money has been paid to the Treasury on dividends prior to these letters being sent out from the Treasury, it was on book profits and not dividends. This is a clause to indemnify companies against actions on the part of the Government, and the latter part is to indemnify the Government against any action by companies which may have paid on dividends instead of on book profits.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:32 o'clock, until the next Monday.