

Legislative Assembly,*Tuesday, 25th October, 1927.*

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

QUESTION—CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS, ALBANY.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Treasurer: 1, Under what conditions has the grant of £500 been given to the Albany Centenary Celebration Committee? 2, Are there any conditions, and if so, have they been complied with? 3, Will the Albany Centenary Committee be placed on the same footing as that of the State?

The TREASURER replied: 1, On a £1 for £1 basis upon money raised and expended locally by the Albany Centenary Committee, subject to the submission of audited accounts for approval. 2, Yes. 3, The basis of the Albany Centenary has been fixed; the State's has not.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.*Third Reading.*

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [4.36]: I move—

That the Bill be read a third time.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [4.37]: While not opposing the third reading, I consider it my duty to point out the bunch of trouble that will grow for the Minister for Works and the King's Park Board if the measure becomes law. It has been introduced with the object of allowing a certain sum out of a certain fund to be handed to the King's Park authorities for the purpose of keeping up their roads. Now, who contributes to this fund? The owners of private cars, owners of taxi cars, owners of omnibus vehicles, owners of charabancs, and owners of heavy wagons and lorries. I

want to know how the park authorities and the Minister for Works are going to prohibit the owners of charabancs and heavy lorries from running their vehicles through the park in view of the circumstance that those owners will be contributing far more than the owners of private cars and taxi cars.

Hon. W. J. George: I question that statement.

Mr. ANGELO: Individually they pay five or six times as much.

Hon. W. J. George: Yes, but not in the bulk.

Mr. ANGELO: That is the point I am getting at. How is the owner of a motor lorry, paying £30 or £40 for his license, to be told that he cannot travel on the park roads when the owner of a motor car, paying about £5, is permitted to do so?

Hon. W. J. George: Heavy vehicles will not want to go up Mount-street..

Mr. ANGELO: The point I have raised is one to be considered. I recently suggested that a surcharge should be placed on the license fee. The sponsor of the Bill in this House tells me that the park authorities expect to get about £1,400 annually from the fund: the Minister could not say what the amount would be. I find that a surcharge of only 2s. 6d. to private cars, and say 5s. to taxi cars, would raise enough money; and then there could be no question as to rights.

Hon. W. J. George: That is not the principle at all. Evidently you are not a democrat.

The Premier: What the hon. member suggests is the very thing that has been protested against. The adoption of his suggestion would intensify the dissatisfaction all round.

Mr. ANGELO: If the owners of private motor cars and of taxi cars paid a special surcharge to be transmitted to the park funds, they would have a perfect right to go through the park. If no surcharge were levied on charabancs, omnibuses and heavy wagons that do not go through the park, there would be no complaint from their owners. No doubt the Bill will have to go through; but I certainly suggest to the Minister that before the close of the session he ask the authority of Parliament to add a surcharge of half-a-crown to the fees of private motor cars, and a surcharge of 5s. to the fees of taxi cars, to be collected when future traffic fees are being collected.

The Minister for Works: Do you want the session to finish this side of Christmas?

Mr. ANGELO: A Bill of one clause would do that.

The Premier: Yes, indeed!

The Minister for Works: One week would not suffice for the discussion.

Mr. ANGELO: Who would object to the half-crown surcharge?

Hon. W. J. George: Everyone would object on principle.

Mr. ANGELO: The hon. member interjecting would receive £30 from a wagon owner, part of it going towards upkeep of the park roads, and at the same time would say to the licensee, "You are not to go through the park." There is only one way of doing what is needed, and that is the way I suggest, which would involve no cost in collection. When a man pays his traffic fee, he will pay 2s. 6d. extra; and the accumulated half-crowns will be sent on to the King's Park Board. I am not moving to that effect, but am merely making the suggestion. I thought it my duty to point out the trouble likely to ensue. The Minister has had a good many Press comments about closing roads and diverting charabancs and omnibuses; and he will have a good many more if he attempts to preclude people who contribute to the park funds from using the park roads.

HON. W. J. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [4.43]: I generally respect the hon. member's experience and opinions, but in the present case he appears to be simply playing to the gallery.

Mr. Angelo: What is the name of the gallery?

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: No motor lorry carrying heavy weights would face the task of entering King's Park from Ferdinand-street, going up the steep hill past the Swan Brewery and meeting another heavy grade, then getting on to the flat by Lord Forrest's statue, and finally coming down Malcolm-street. Why would not those vehicles face that route? Firstly because the expense of petrol required to get up those grades would go a long way towards cutting out any profits, and secondly because to travel down Malcolm-street or a similar grade in coming through the park would not be safe for such vehicles. If the hon. member knew the Perth-Fremantle road as well as I do, he would be aware that it is no infrequent thing to see on that thoroughfare a motor lorry carrying from eight to ten tons. Sometimes

the big girders or principals made in Fremantle for Perth buildings extend some 30 feet over the vehicle; and in turning all the curves and corners in the park the vehicle would probably do considerable damage to shrubs and trees. The traffic regulations, unless they have been altered recently, specially lay it down that any vehicle carrying long lengths of timber or other material must use the roads only during the early part of the day, because of the danger to other traffic from long lengths. Furthermore, the original regulations lay it down—and I expect this is still in force—that a vehicle carrying long timbers or long girders must be followed by some person to warn approaching traffic of the danger that might ensue from a swerve. The member for Gasecoyne is probably not aware, or perhaps he has forgotten, that some years ago a census was taken of the traffic through the park to the Perth-Fremantle road at Nedlands, no other route being available at the time. It was then found that between half past seven in the morning and half past nine in the day, a period of two hours, 643 motor vehicles passed through the park. That had to continue for some little time, because, as I have said, there was then no other road that traffic could use. I do not know what the Minister is going to give the board. I have no great love for the president of the board, but I must say that as president he has done good work and has even supplemented out of his own pocket the fund for keeping the roads in repair. For that I give him credit. The members of the Automobile Club number nearly 6,000. There are some very decent people in the club, yet 80 per cent. of the club members have never been in the park since the toll was imposed. There are among the members of that club people who contribute to every charitable movement that comes along; men that certainly are not mean. Why did those people refuse to pay the toll imposed by the King's Park Board? Because they regarded it as the imposition of a tax for going into the people's park, an outrage upon the people's rights and upon every democratic principle. It does not matter how much the toll may have been. That does not count. It was an outrage of a principle, the principle that the rights of the people should be preserved. I am against impositions of that sort. An instance occurred some 30 years ago, when the City Council consented to some bowling greens being opened on the Esplanade—this was

after a very long fight, in which I was interested—conditionally that there should be free access to the grounds at all times, night and day. Before long, however, the club locked the gates, and not very long afterwards two councillors went down there and, in front of all the people assembled, broke down the gates. I should like to see something of the same action taken in respect of King's Park so as to assert the rights of the people. I would make one to contribute towards the cost of re-erecting the gates. I would be prepared to take any steps to vindicate the rights of the people. As to the amount to be paid out of the traffic fees to the park board, there should be no difficulty in assessing them. In my time we divided the roads into three classes. The third class comprised those roads upon which there was comparatively little traffic. We cannot say that there is comparatively little traffic through King's Park, but the second-class roads could be taken as a basis and the board granted two-thirds of the rate allotted for such roads. As to the amount in fees paid by the motor lorries, consider the damage they do to the roads! One lorry carrying six or eight tons does more damage than do a dozen motor cars. I found that out on the Perth-Fremantle road when I had to put sufficient work on it to effect repairs. We quietly watched and saw how the damage was being done, and when we found heavy motor lorries causing big damage, we made them pay. If I were the Minister to-day I would do the same thing again. I have no feeling against motor lorries on the score of their competition with the railways, for I realise the immense convenience they are to the merchants. I think the Minister will not be swayed by any specious arguments in support of the proposal to impose surcharges of 2s. 6d. and 5s. I believe if the motorists as a class were asked to subscribe to the fund for maintaining the roads in the park, there would be forthcoming sufficient money for the purpose. The motorists are as keen as I am in frustrating any insidious attempts to encroach upon the rights of the people in King's Park. Surely we should rejoice in the fact that we have there the finest park in Australia, a park rendered possible by the foresight of the great man whose statue stands in it. To now call in to the support of the park the tawdry methods of the public house bar with its racing sweeps—I put it on the same level—is to my mind an insult to all right-thinking people in the State. I am aware that not everybody views this

exactly as I do. Again, look at the aggregate amount paid by the motorists. Individually, of course, the motor lorries pay more—as they should do—than the motor cars; but taking them collectively, the people who use the park with their motor cars subscribe five or six times as much as do the owners of the lorries. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) probably is not aware that the amount collected from motor vehicle owners in the metropolitan area represents £60,000 or £70,000 per annum. Of that, not one-fourth is paid by the owners of motor lorries. The great bulk of it comes out of the pockets of the motorists.

Mr. Angelo: I paid my 10s. to the park.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I would not pay 10 farthings. I would sooner give £100 to be spent upon the roads than pay one farthing to interfere with the rights of the people in that park. It is the people's park, the result of the wise policy of one great man supported by other big men, and it is as much our duty to guard the rights and privileges of the people who wish to use King's Park as it is our duty to support any other principle that we may hold.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [4.53]: I am not surprised at the protest raised by the member for Gascoyne, for he indicated on the second reading and again, I think, in Committee, that that was the attitude he thought should be taken up by the Government. On the second reading I remarked that if I had the choice between the proposition put up by the member for Gascoyne and the Bill, I would support the member for Gascoyne with his surcharge on all motors to make up sufficient funds to keep the King's Park roads in order. That is a wise proposition. But the Bill before us is all that we have to accept or reject. I have accepted it, and I do not think there is any principle at stake, as the member for Murray-Wellington (Hon. W. J. George) emphasised in most extravagant language in condemnation of those who, as he said, will not protect the rights of the people. There has been no encroachment on the rights of the people. An attempt was made by the board to collect funds to keep the roads in order so that motorists could travel over them with safety and in comfort. The only means suggested to the board was that they should levy a tax of 10s. per annum on motor cars. The Automobile Club raised a great protest against that. I do not condemn the board for their action. I have

always held the opinion that those who use anything should pay for it, and should not expect the general taxpayer or the King's Park Board to keep the park roads in good order so that motorists can rush through there at any pace they like.

Hon. W. J. George: They have to go at not more than a certain pace.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Years ago I used to drive through the park in a sulky. At such times I was trotting at about eight miles an hour and, if I was doing eight miles the motorists were doing anything up to 60 miles. I am not in any way scared that the House will reject the third reading, but I do not know that we are justified in making such a song about it. The member for Gascoyne believes that the surcharges would have been the better system. However, we have not that proposition before us. We have only the Bill, which enables the park board to come within the scope of the Traffic Act. I think it will be wise to pass the third reading.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.56]: Like the member for Gascoyne, I think I can see trouble in store for the Government over the Bill. I can sympathise with the member of another place who, as president of the King's Park Board, with his fellow board members, found himself up against great difficulty, and in a desire to provide good roads for the motorists, decided that a certain small sum should be levied upon each car passing through the park. If the Government, when the Bill is passed, propose to hand to the board certain funds from the traffic fees, I hope the Minister will give us an assurance that the same concession will be made in respect of country parks having roads passing through them. As suggested by the member for Gascoyne, if we had a surcharge upon all motor vehicles, it would relieve the King's Park Board of heavy expenditure in maintaining good roads. The member for Murray-Wellington in endeavouring to chastise the member for Gascoyne, pointed out that when a note was taken of the cars passing through the park, it was found that there were no fewer than 643 within a given period. It is the motor transport that has placed the board in its difficult position. I have never been able to see why the Automobile Club should have raised so much objection to the charge levied on those wishing to use the park roads. The member for Murray-Wellington waxed eloquent

about preserving the rights of the people. I can remember when he occupied the position of Commissioner of Railways. These things, I suppose, depend upon the viewpoint. A large section of the people strongly objected to his removal of an overhead footbridge, but the hon. member did not consider the rights of the people for one moment. When the shades of night had fallen he had the bridge removed and his remark was, "Alone I did it."

The Minister for Works: He did the right thing, too.

Hon. W. J. George: It was done on a Saturday morning in daylight after notice had been sent to the council.

Mr. THOMSON: I understood it was done at night.

Hon. W. J. George: Anyhow, I did it.

Mr. THOMSON: Quite so. Now, however, the hon. member professes to be jealous of the rights of the people.

The Minister for Works: He represented the people and acted on their behalf.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course. The King's Park Board have been placed in an unfortunate position. Quite a large number of motorists would willingly pay the board 10s. a year for the right to use the park roads.

The Minister for Works: Very few have paid.

Mr. THOMSON: One member of this House has paid.

The Minister for Works: He stands alone.

Mr. THOMSON: Had I lived in Perth I should have had no objection to paying. The people who live in the metropolitan area and enjoy such a magnificent drive as that through King's Park are fortunate to get the benefit for 10s. a year. When we contrast their position with that of people in the country and on the goldfields, we realise how fortunate they are.

The Minister for Mines: A man from the country might come to Perth only once a year and have to pay the 10s. for that.

Mr. THOMSON: And he would willingly pay. I agree with the member for Gascoyne. The Minister for Works stated that the country districts receive the whole of their traffic fees. The money is urgently needed, and the country districts could do with more. It must be remembered that with the exception of one portion of the

goldfields, no part of the country receives any direct vote for its parks.

The Premier: And that one has been cut out.

Mr. THOMSON: We used to vote £100 for Kalgoorlie; perhaps it has been cut out in late years.

Mr. Latham: There are other parks as well as King's Park.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, and they should be entitled to consideration. Can the Minister tell us the estimated amount that the King's Park Board will receive under this measure?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. THOMSON: Then we are being asked to pass the Bill in the dark.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Council with an amendment.

BILL—LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK (SINKING FUND).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th October.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.6]: I do not propose to delay the House on this small Bill. It simply deals with debts incurred when Western Australia was a Crown Colony, and the Premier is fortunate in finding himself in the position of being able to save £11,580 up to the year 1934. I am pleased that the revenue of the State will benefit to that extent. It shows that even in the early days before we had any idea that the State would develop as it has done, the men responsible for laying the foundations of the financial system certainly built them solidly. This matter will not be affected by the Financial Agreement that will be discussed later on. I was interested to read in this morning's paper the statement by the Minister for Railways regarding the proceedings of the Loan Council at Canberra. The suspension of the sinking fund dealt with in this Bill will not affect the loans in question or the future borrowings of the State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Council's requested amendment.

Amendment requested by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2, Subclause 1.—Insert after the word "tax" in line four a proviso as follows:—"Provided that the rate of tax payable on the unimproved value of improved agricultural land shall be one halfpenny in the pound sterling."

The PREMIER: This being a money Bill, a request only has been made by the Council.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is very modest on its part.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the amendment be not made.

It is a proposal to reduce the rate of tax upon improved agricultural land and leave the tax on unimproved agricultural land as at present. I cannot accept the amendment, and I ask the Committee not to agree to the request. As I said when the Bill was before us and on other occasions this session, the finances are not in a position to warrant our agreeing to any reduction of taxation. We are passing through a transition or uncertain period, and are not yet aware what the outcome will be of the proposed Financial Agreement. It would be entirely wrong and foolish for Parliament to start to indulge in the luxury of reducing taxation merely because we happened to have a very small surplus for one year and expect a small surplus for the present year.

Hon. G. Taylor: I suppose the requested amendment would involve £8,000 or £10,000.

The PREMIER: It is difficult to estimate the amount, but probably it would involve £12,000. It would not be wise to reduce taxation at this stage. If the Financial Agreement becomes law, then the whole field of taxation may be reviewed next year—

Hon. G. Taylor: Will be.

The PREMIER: Yes, and if my estimate is realised, we shall have £350,000 more than the estimated surplus of £34,199.

Hon. G. Taylor: There will be justification then.

The PREMIER: It will be for Parliament to say how the money is to be utilised. Probably some of it might be used for the purpose of reducing some forms of taxation. But we ought not to forget that, although there has been a slight increase in land tax during the last three years, there has been a considerable reduction in income tax. This amendment would mean very little to the individual landholder, so small an amount that I submit it is not worth the while of another place to ask for the reduction.

Mr. Angelo: Do you suggest it is not worth collecting?

The PREMIER: I say the amount is so small as to be practically of no benefit to the landholder.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It would go in a very deserving direction.

The PREMIER: It would be a very desirable thing to abolish all taxation, but the services of the State could not be carried on without money.

Mr. Latham: It only means reducing your surplus by £10,000.

The PREMIER: The time has not yet arrived when we should talk of reducing taxation. We should write ourselves down as foolish if, on the first sign of the finances balancing, we proceeded to reduce taxation. In the preceding year or two taxation has been considerably reduced. This amendment would not benefit the average farmer through the wheat belt to the extent of more than £1.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It would halve his tax whatever it was.

The PREMIER: The land tax for the average wheat farmer is about £2, and this amendment would reduce it by half. In view of what has been done by way of reducing income tax, members would not be justified in passing this amendment. Although it may be said that the farmer has had his land tax increased during the past two or three years, it is difficult to get anyone to admit that he has benefited by a reduction in his income tax. The average farmer in the wheat belt, during the past few years, has had a reduction in income tax of nearly 50 per cent. The farmer who, three years ago, was paying £37 a year in income tax, as a result of the abolition of the 15 per cent. super tax, and the reduction of

33½ per cent., will now pay £21. In this case the reduction has been from £37 to £21 a year. As against that, there is the very small increase of £1 a year that has been levied on him by the additional land tax.

Mr. Thomson: Is that striking an average over the three years?

The PREMIER: That is what he will pay this year.

Mr. Griffiths: Farmers tell me there is a 300 or 400 per cent. increase in the land tax.

The PREMIER: Members have repeatedly been told that the increase was in the valuation, not in taxation. If there had been an increase in the rate of taxation, the farmer would have had to pay an increased amount through the increase in valuation. Instead of complaining, the farmer ought to congratulate himself that his valuations have for many years past been far below what they ought to have been. No one can say that the present valuations are excessive. It is merely a case of previous valuations having been ridiculously low. For many years people have been paying on a rate of about 7s. an acre, and surely it cannot be contended that 30s. is too high. In the past they have been escaping legitimate taxation.

Mr. Mann: How will the decision in the Full Court affect the position?

The PREMIER: It will affect it very seriously. I am contemplating asking for an amendment to the Assessment Act to remedy the defect. When the Assessment Act was passed Parliament did not intend the interpretation to be placed upon it that has been given to it by the Full Court. The Act stood for a long time, notwithstanding the keen critics, those who specialise in making up income tax returns, and it was only the other day that the defect was discovered.

Mr. Lindsay: It affects only the metropolitan area.

The PREMIER: There are many keen taxpayers in the metropolitan area, who would not have allowed the other basis of taxation to continue if the defect had been very obvious.

Mr. Mann: It is more than three years since the point was raised in the department.

The PREMIER: There must have been some doubt on the question or the matter would have been taken further since then. The revenue will be seriously affected by the decision, and I intend to ask the House to remedy the position by amending the Act.

Hon. G Taylor: This session?

The PREMIER: Yes. I cannot afford to lose the revenue involved by that interpretation. I cannot accept the amendment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope the Premier will give this matter a second thought, and agree to the amendment. Years ago he said he thought we ought to reduce taxation, but now he wants to retain what he has. Probably the amount in question would be more than £12,000. If so, the Premier could utilise the £11,500, that he will be relieved of paying, towards making good the deficiency. The money could not be put to better use than to reduce taxation. Last year's surplus was due in a large measure to the amounts that have been contributed in the past by taxpayers. We have certainly been relieved of so much taxation as a result of the Federal aid, but the money was collected by the Federal Government before we got it.

The Minister for Railways: They take only their share of the taxation that is paid in Western Australia.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We pay a great deal by way of taxation to the Federal Government, directly and indirectly. We alone do not get special consideration because we do this. The other States receive large sums of money too, and we contribute our share towards those amounts. We have undoubtedly contributed to the Murray water scheme. We contribute to grants wherever they are made in Australia, and we contribute to the grants that we get ourselves. The Federal authorities collect three times as much by way of taxation from our own people as we do.

The Minister for Railways: I think they collect six times as much. In indirect taxation the amount is equal to about £7 per head.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We pay State and Federal taxation, and the charges imposed by the local authorities. Our people pay $\frac{1}{2}$ d. vermin tax, and they pay $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £1 in order that freights on the railways may be reduced. That $\frac{1}{2}$ d. should never have been imposed. I object to taxing landowners in order that the railways may reduce freights. That is a business concern, and it should stand up to its responsibilities. To impose a special rate to cover the reduction in railway freights, for instance, would be wrong. The railways do not exist for the benefit alone of the people in the country, but for the people as a whole. I think the Committee will agree that special

taxation for railway purposes is wrong in principle and does not work fairly.

The Minister for Railways: It does not benefit the railways, because they get none of it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course it goes through the Treasury.

The Premier: If the returns went through the railways, the departmental figures would be improved, but the revenue would come back to the Treasury just the same.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course it would not make the slightest difference to the financial results of the Treasury for the year. I hope the Premier will realise that the amendment merely asks for a reduction in the tax in respect of the unimproved value of improved land. That is fair and reasonable, and I think the Premier should agree to it. I do not know why the amendment should be resisted. The Premier hopes to pay less than half of the contributions that we have been making to the sinking fund.

The Premier: We cannot reduce taxation in anticipation of that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the Premier has anticipated it because he took it into account in his Budget Speech. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Hon. G Taylor: Not always.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Premier has taken advantage of the provisions of the Financial Agreement, he should carry that further and give consideration to the amendment that is sought.

The Premier: But that is absurd. I have put the money away, and if the Agreement goes through it will be all right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know the Premier has set aside a certain amount, but he cannot say exactly what the amount will be. It will not be exactly £350,000. The Minister in another place said it would be £400,000, but the fact remains that we will have to pay interest on each bond held, and the Premier will have to know just what bonds he holds at the moment of cancellation. I hope the Premier will give the Committee the information as to exactly what amount he will receive.

The Premier: I gave the House all the information I had when I delivered the Budget speech.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the amount will be something more or less than £350,000.

The Premier: As a matter of fact it is £351,000.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then we shall discuss that question on the Estimates. The Committee will agree that the farmer is already overloaded by taxation in one form or another. The tariff is against the farmer to a shocking degree because it increases the cost of his requirements by upwards of 60 per cent. That is not the fault of the State Government, or it would be modified. On top of that there is the Federal taxation and the State land and income tax.

The Premier: Every other citizen pays that, as well as the farmer.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not every citizen.

The Premier: If a man does not own land, of course he does not pay.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The farmer has two vermin taxes to pay and many other charges. The taxes paid by other citizens to whom the Premier referred are passed on, but the farmer cannot do that. The land is really the farmer's raw material and we should have as much right to tax the raw material that goes into a foundry as we have to tax the farmer's land. In reviewing taxation I would be inclined to regard the farmer's land as his raw material, and to let him off taxation altogether if he were using his holding to its full capacity. Of course we cannot provide free services without taxation and when replying to the Premier's Budget speech I attempted to show how little real revenue we have. We want to be fair in our taxation and to see that those who should pay, do pay their fair share. We should not overburden one section more than another.

The Minister for Railways: The farmer does pretty well.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not as well as the Minister. The farmer pays in a dozen different ways and the amendment is reasonable because it applies only to the man who has improved his holding. I cannot understand why the Premier, who said four or five years ago that he could reduce taxation, now opposes a proposal to effect a reduction.

Mr. Thomson: But he is Treasurer now.

The Minister for Mines: But he has already reduced taxation by 33½ per cent.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but that was made good by the Federal Government. Without that aid it could not have been done. The Premier had the full amount made good and some thousands were in hand as well.

The Premier: But I took off the extra 15 per cent. super tax.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, the Legislative Council took that off. In any event we received £200,000 from the Federal Government and that enabled the Premier to reduce taxation. There was no great merit in that action, apart from the actual reduction by the Premier, because the amount was made good by the Federal Government.

The Premier: But I need not have made use of the money for reducing taxation. I could have spent it in many other directions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the money would have had to be appropriated by Parliament.

The Premier: And we would have had a say in that.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: At any rate, it was a very good action.

The Minister for Mines: Then why complain?

Mr. Thomson: We want more.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No one is complaining at all. I say it was a proper use to which to apply the money received from the Federal Government. I suggest that the Premier should not resist the amendment merely because he reduced taxation by 33½ per cent., the amount involved having been made good by the Federal Government. The Premier has included a clause in the Bill which means that if the Federal Government discontinue the special grant to Western Australia, the tax can be resumed.

Mr. Thomson: We will not anticipate that.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Federal Bill makes provision for the special grant continuing for five years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The recommendation of the Royal Commission was that it should continue for 25 years, and I hope we shall get it. In the meantime I trust the amendment will be made.

Mr. THOMSON: I had great hopes that the Premier was going to accept this modest request made by another place. In view of the fact that we have just passed a Bill that will effect a saving to the Treasury of approximately £12,000, I thought the Treasurer might see fit to accede to the request. We on this side of the House look upon the suggested amendment as the establishment of a principle, respecting land taxation, long recognised in this State. We find that as far back as 1907 Section 17 of the Act passed in that year, gave a more liberal

abatement than is contained in the request now before us. We as a political section, stand solidly for the recognition of that principle. The Treasurer stated that he had gone into several cases and he gave as an illustration the benefits farmers had derived from the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. reduction in income tax. He pointed out that three years ago a man who paid £37 was to-day paying only £21. The statement is not correct and I would draw the attention of the Committee to the difference between those citizens who, previously to the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. reduction paid £37 and who to-day are deriving a benefit from that reduction. I admit that the man in business has derived a benefit from the reduction and I am glad that the Government were able to afford relief to the taxpayer to that extent. It was a wise move on the part of the Treasurer to use part of the grant he received from the Commonwealth for that purpose. He, however, did not go fully enough into the position of the man who was making his living from the soil. Prior to the amendment of the Assessment Act of 1924, if a farmer had to pay £21 as income tax and his land tax was assessed at £11, he paid only the £21. The £11 was an abatement. To-day the farmer who has to pay £21 income tax, and whose land tax is assessed at £11, gets a rebate of half and so pays £21 plus £5 10s. But on top of that he has to pay vermin tax of another £5 10s. The man in business who pays a £21 income tax is much better off. Our contention, therefore, is that the farming community, in view of the fact that they have to make their living from the land, should be entitled to the abatement that existed before. The Premier told us that the farmer should be very pleased that the valuations had been raised.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Mr. THOMSON: Well then, that the valuations had been increased.

The Premier: That it will be many years before all the valuations are increased when they all ought now to be increased.

Mr. THOMSON: The productivity of the land of the farmer who is making a living from it is not increased by virtue of the increase in the valuation.

The Premier: Of course it is not.

Mr. THOMSON: But the farmer has every reason to complain that while the productivity of the soil has not increased by virtue of the fact that valuations have been in-

creased, he has to pay additional taxation. We know that the man who wants to sell his land is pleased that the valuations have been increased, but the man who wishes to remain on the soil is satisfied that the valuations should not be altered. We find from the report of the Taxation Commissioner that the valuations in the country districts have not been completed. Those in whose districts the taxation officials have not yet been, are still being taxed on the old basis.

Mr. Corboy: It will all be done step by step.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier might well concede the request made by another place.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am disappointed that the Government have not seen fit to accept the amendment. All parties are agreed that people who come to this State and who take up land should improve and develop it. The exemption sought has appealed to the Labour Party in other parts of the Commonwealth, and in some of the States special exemptions have been given to those who are properly utilising their land in small areas. I fully believed that when the amendment came forward it would be accepted by the Government. The Leader of the Country Party endeavoured to have inserted in the Bill a more liberal amendment, but in my opinion the amendment suggested by another place is more desirable because it will mean less sacrifice of revenue and the benefit will go entirely to the man producing wealth from the soil. I hope the Committee will grant the concession to those who are building up Western Australia. Valuations have been increased and in many instances have been doubled. In addition there is the vermin tax.

The Premier: If you wish, we will repeal the vermin tax.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That is a matter that I should be pleased to discuss. As to the lowered income tax, I give the Government every credit for the substantial reduction they made—a thoroughly right and proper reduction. The Government need not be alarmed lest they may not be able to continue the reduction, since we are sure of the Federal disabilities grant for at least five years; indeed, I can see that grant being paid to Western Australia for many years to come. However, the rate of income tax is now doubled and the exemptions are taken away. The Council's requested amendment offers an opportunity for penalising those who do not use their lands, and for giving relief to the best men Western Australia

possesses—those who adequately use their lands.

The Premier: This tax was passed by another place.

Mr. Thomson: Much to your surprise.

The Premier: Not at all.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I hope the Upper House will on this occasion take a firm stand and protect the people whose interests they are elected to conserve—people working their land, in common with all other industrious citizens.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the Treasurer will agree to the requested amendment. As a matter of principle Western Australians for many years have advocated that farmers should be encouraged to utilise their lands. The Premier on a visit to an agricultural conference at Harvey made an excellent speech on the urgent need for forcing all lands into use.

The Premier: The way to do that is to tax unused land.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Premier on that occasion made it clear that he would take steps to force idle lands into use. The requested amendment tends towards what well-wishers of the State have in mind. The amount involved being only £10,000 or £12,000, I hope the Premier, in view of the principle at stake, will agree to the Council's suggestion. The farmer pays two taxes—income tax and land tax. Those engaged in secondary production are not called upon to pay taxation for using, say, machinery. It may be argued that a factory site pays land tax, but the amount of that tax would be comparatively a bagatelle. Generally, land taxation has increased by 102 per cent. in two years. That is a most serious increase, but in this case it is the principle with which I and other members are concerned. The forcing into use of all available lands is a matter of the first importance. The Premier evidently overlooks the meaning that may be read into his statement made at Harvey. Something similar, moreover, was uttered by the hon. gentleman at Boulder. Men engaged in running factories pay, in comparison, but the very slightest taxation on their factory sites.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Premier will agree to the requested amendment. To tax a man twice is unfair.

The Premier: Land taxation is universally recognised as a sound economic practice.

Mr. LATHAM: Someone can be found to acknowledge anything. Land being the

farmer's tools of trade, he is taxed on that and then he is taxed on his income from the land. It was never anticipated by people interested in land that another place would agree to this taxation. In return the Premier agreed to abolish the supertax. Undoubtedly the arrangement was the result of bargaining at a conference. Only £12,000 per year is involved in the requested amendment, and the production of the State will be benefited to a much greater extent than £12,000 annually if the Council's suggestion is adopted.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: If I were simply to say "ditto" to what previous speakers have said, possibly it would save the time of the Committee and do just as much good as will the little I am going to say. From the Treasurer's viewpoint the increased valuations are good, but from the point of view of the Minister for Lands they are bad, particularly when they go too high. Whenever I have referred to these increased valuations members on the Government side have declared that the taxation itself has not been increased. It is of no use telling the taxpayer that his taxation has not been increased. In the Meckering area one block of land previously valued at £120 is now valued at £268; another previously valued at £752 has now been increased to £1,514 while a third previously valued at £720 is now valued at £1,662.

Hon. G. Taylor: These values did not jump up in a year or two.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: They were increased in one year. I do not object to the valuation placed on the land, but I combat the statement that taxation has not been increased. The rate has not been increased but the taxpayer is paying more in taxation than he did previously. This talk of taxation not having been increased is quite wrong. The only thing that has not been increased is the rate of tax.

Mr. THOMSON: The Treasurer, having made up his mind that he will not accept the requested amendment, will expect his supporters to fall in behind him. If it should come to a conference, and managers are appointed, I hope this side of the House will receive consideration. Let me draw the Premier's attention to what Queensland does to-day. There the legislation provides that from the amount of tax payable on the income of any taxpayer derived from any

agricultural or grazing pursuit there may be deducted the amount of any land tax actually paid by the taxpayer in respect of the same year on the land on which such agricultural or grazing pursuits are carried on.

The Premier: It is like listening to the devil quoting scripture, to hear you quoting Queensland legislation.

Mr. THOMSON: We on this side have frequently quoted the beneficent effects of legislation in Queensland.

The Premier: The destructive effects.

Mr. THOMSON: From the Government's point of view, the beneficent effects of Queensland legislation. However, I have quoted this to-night to show the attitude that we on this side of the House adopt. There should be only one tax paid by the man making his living from the land. I can only reiterate my regret that the Premier has not decided to agree to the request made by the Council. It is not nearly so much as we endeavoured to obtain when previously the Bill was before us.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is no more equitable form of taxation than a tax on the unimproved land, a fair, equitable and just tax. The increased value of the land is a community value created by the community. I am not surprised at the parochial outlook of members on the Opposition cross-benches. They would have none but the farmer enjoy this proposed concession. The men producing gold, wheat, beef and mutton are nothing to them. Incidentally, no other industry gets so much assistance from the Treasury as the farmer gets. Yet members on the Opposition cross-benches are always endeavouring to secure still further favours for the farmer. Actually, those members are looking, not for justice, but for political support. The unimproved value of every block of land in this State is due solely to Government activities, railways, water supplies, and the energies of the community attracted thereby. I compliment the Premier on his attitude towards the Council's requested amendment.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I feel sure the Premier will accept this requested amendment. There is no harder-working section of the community than the farmers, who are unsparing in their efforts to improve their land so as to increase its productiveness. Yet the member for Murchison would condemn the farmers.

Mr. Marshall: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The hon. member, in effect, said the unimproved value of the land had increased because of the activities of other people.

Mr. Thomson: If we were discussing town blocks we could understand his contention.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes. This requested amendment is deserving of support, and I hope the Premier will accept it. I have always advocated a tax on unimproved land. The Premier has never advocated a tax on the improved value of land. The Government do not care if a man holds 100, 1,000 or 20,000 acres of land so long as he improves it to its fullest capacity. The amendment requested by the Council merely aims at encouraging such a man.

Mr. LINDSAY: I would not have spoken but for the remarks of the member for Murchison. It was surprising to hear him say that the only industry that received assistance from the Government was the agricultural industry. The Auditor General's report contains particulars of assistance granted to mining and other industries, and it appears that agriculture gets no more than its fair share. I agree with the principle of the land tax, but the original amendment altered the tax from one on land to one on energy. Agriculturists must hold a considerable area of land in order to get a living. Therefore the amount represented by land value in a farm is considerably greater than that required for business or a mine. The basis of valuation is not reasonable or fair. The value is generally fixed on sales and even on the highest prices realised in a district. The Dalwallinu land has recently been valued at £3 10s. per acre. It will be a bad thing for Western Australia if land values here soar as high as they have done in the Eastern States. A high price might be all right for the man who sells, but we should be more concerned about the man who is working the land. The man who is producing from his land is a better asset to the State than the man who is not, and there should be some relief for the man who improves his land within the meaning of the Act.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	..	14

Majority for .. 7

AYES.

Mr. Chesson
Mr. Clydesdale
Mr. Collier
Mr. Corboy
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Heron
Mr. W. D. Johnson
Mr. Kennedy
Mr. Lambert
Mr. Lamond
Mr. Lutey

Mr. Marshall
Mr. McCallum
Mr. Munzie
Mr. Rowe
Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Troy
Mr. A. Wanebrough
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilson
(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo
Mr. Brown
Mr. Davy
Mr. Ferguson
Mr. George
Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Latham

Mr. Lindsay
Mr. Mann
Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Sampson
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. North
(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.

Mr. Millington
Miss Holman
Mr. Cunningham
Mr. Kenneally

NOES.

Mr. Thomson
Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Teesdale
Mr. E. B. Johnston

Question thus passed; the Council's amendment not made.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1927-28.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 20th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Panton in the Chair.

Votes—Premier's Department, £13,896; Governor's Establishment, £2,495; Executive Council, £5—agreed to.

Vote—London Agency, £11,691:

Mr. GRIFFITHS: A suggestion has been made that it would be a good thing to inform us of the activities of the Agent General's Department. We all know what an energetic man Mr. Angwin is, and no doubt he has effected some improvements in Savoy House. I have been informed that samples of wheat have been exhibited there until they were full of weevil and that it has been difficult to get up to date information about the crops.

Mr. THOMSON: Probably we do not get as much benefit from the London Agency as we might. Doubtless the Premier will

say the Agent General exerts every effort to secure the greatest possible publicity for the State. Since the appointment of Mr. Mercer as Publicity Officer in Perth, the activities of the State have become better known than ever they were. His appointment was a step in the right direction. It would pay the State to have an efficient publicity officer in London, even if it cost £1,000 or £1,500 a year, in order that by judicious work the many activities of Western Australia, particularly in the agricultural districts, might be made more widely known. It has been the custom of several of our Agents-General to visit agricultural shows in England and talk about the State to the people they met there. It might be possible to furnish an exhibition van, and send it round those shows with the object of advertising the resources of the State. When a person calls at Savoy House with a view to coming to Western Australia, he is immediately sent on to Australia House, where the officers are not permitted to differentiate between the States of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Mann: It is alleged that they differentiate in favour of Victoria.

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. Angwin has stated in this House, in effect, that those who had no money were advised to come to this State, which offered greater opportunities for those who were penniless. We should make every effort to secure other classes of people who are available for settlement here. In Singapore, China and India there are many civil servants and people associated with commercial enterprises, who have arrived at the retiring age. Most of them have a little capital. They are not able to live in the Old Country because the climate is too hard for them, but they might be induced to settle in Western Australia. They offer a profitable avenue for securing desirable citizens. Through the Agent General we should launch out in these different channels, which radiate from the heart of the Empire, and disseminate valuable information concerning Western Australia in those various parts of the world. I commend to the Premier the idea of appointing a publicity officer at Savoy House. We can well afford to spend a few thousand pounds in advising the right class of people that we have the goods to deliver. On the exhibits at Savoy House we spent £19 last year. I do not blame the Premier, for he would naturally desire to see the Estimates

kept as low as possible. There is, however, such a thing as false economy. We must advertise our wares in England better than we are doing. I should like to see the vote increased by several thousands of pounds. The wise expenditure of that money would result in great benefit to the State. In view of the good that has been achieved for Western Australia by the appointment of a State publicity officer, there can be no doubt that the appointment of a kindred officer in London would yield excellent results.

The PREMIER: The expenditure on exhibits at Savoy House was not a matter of economy or prudence of the Estimates in any department here. The money that is expended each year on exhibits at our London agency is in the hands of the Agent-General. He is supplied with all that he requires. Never has Savoy House been stinted in regard to any exhibits that the Agent-General has wished to have. If the amount spent was small last year, it was because no more was required.

Mr. Thomson: I am speaking of the principle of the thing.

The PREMIER: I was at Savoy House two years ago. Having regard to the space available, I think the exhibits did us credit. I have heard many travellers comment favourably upon what they saw there. The trouble is that we have not sufficient space for the purpose, although the best possible use is made of that which is available. I was greatly surprised to see the quality and variety of the exhibits that were displayed when I was in London. If we had larger premises we could make a beautiful display of our products. The Queensland agency further down the street has more space than we have, and has a very fine display. They have a double window front in which to show their products. Most of our window space is on a side street.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell. That is not of great value.

The PREMIER: No, it is off the track of the people.

Mr. Davy: There are more people round our agency office than round the Queensland office.

The PREMIER: Yes. A traveller who recently returned from the Old Country said that Western Australia was better known than most of the other States. I found that to be so myself. This is due in a great measure to our Agents-General, and to the

policy of having a Western Australian dinner, which brings together hundreds of prominent citizens in London and serves to advertise the State. I do not think we need a publicity officer in London. What would he be required to do? People who call at Savoy House with a view to migrating to Western Australia are not sent to Australia House, but are dealt with by the Agent-General. Only those who desire to migrate under the agreement are sent to Australia House, because the selection of migrants in that case is in the hands of the Commonwealth Government. It is no use talking about combing the farming areas of England for migrants. Hundreds of our own people cannot get land as it is. It is a distressing thing to see so many of our young people standing by month after month because they cannot get a block. It is no use launching out upon any scheme in England for the settlement of people on Crown lands, when we have no Crown lands suitable for wheat growing available for them just now.

Mr. Latham: Would not a publicity officer assist us in the marketing of our produce?

The PREMIER: I think not. A big campaign has been going on in England lately with regard to the marketing of Australian produce. The Empire Marketing Board have had a million pounds placed at their disposal by the British Government, and part of this is spent in the promotion of the sale of Dominions produce. We cannot expect that board to differentiate between the States. A member of the party (Mr. Huxley) who was here with the Secretary of State for the Colonies told me that the board was spending £150,000 a year in publicity. The policy of the board is to bring prominently before the people of England the desirability of purchasing produce from the Dominions. That organisation is doing good work. A wide publicity has been going on in England for a long time, by means of the various Agents-General and the operations of the Commonwealth Government. The work our Agent-General will be able to do, with his officers, should really be sufficient for our purposes without it being necessary to employ a publicity officer.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like the Agent-General to be placed in a position to travel more than he is able to do on the £1,500 a year that is given to him.

The Premier: There may be something in that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The personal touch counts for a great deal in these matters. There must be many people in England who have sons they want to send out to Australia. Boys from the English public schools would be a great acquisition if we could induce them to come to the State. I do not know of any better means by which that could be brought about than to encourage the Agent-General to travel the length and breadth of Great Britain. We should not keep him in London to give information that a capable secretary would be able to furnish. We talk about getting experienced agriculturists from the Old Land, but I do not know that many people realise how few there are there. I do not suppose there are more than 1,300,000 agriculturists out of a total population of 45,000,000. Apart from that, we have not got any greater draw upon them than have the other Dominions.

The Premier: More than that, the agricultural population has really declined.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so. As a matter of fact, the only person who can travel throughout the whole world safely is the first-class agriculturist, because there is no country where he is not wanted. He is wanted in England itself, where farmers produce tremendous quantities of food-stuffs but in cereals they produce under 20 per cent. of their requirements.

Mr. Davy: But they have more sheep than we have.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. They have 30,000,000 sheep.

The Premier: That is a surprising fact.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But of course they are run everywhere, on rocky hills and so forth. I saw them grazing in Hyde Park, for instance. The fact remains that there is not much chance of getting many people of the class I refer to from the Old Land. We cannot induce the sons of moneyed people to migrate merely by advertising or sending a man round to deliver speeches. The Agent-General is the man who can best get in touch with people of that class. I agree with the Premier in his statement regarding the first-class wheat blocks that are available in the State. We should take a risk with our own people and settle them on the available wheat lands first. There has been a tremendous area of land settled in recent years.

The Premier: Look at the figures for years past and the millions of acres that have been surveyed.

Mr. Thomson: But you have 1,500 blocks available.

The Premier: Yes, in an area surveyed but that will require railways.

Mr. Mann: And you will have 10,000 applicants for the blocks.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course from the East. I agree with the Premier that our people should have the first opportunity to get the land. Of course, our own people should be approved settlers. Then we have land in the South-West and more the other side of Esperance, taking a line from Southern Cross and thence East to Dundas. I believe that is the greatest area of good land we are likely to have for future settlement.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should confine himself to discussing the London Agency.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And in doing so I am discussing the work of the Agent-General in the direction of assisting migration.

Mr. Davy: Give him another £500.

The Premier: I agree that that is a good suggestion, for it will enable him to travel about.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would like to make it possible for him to travel constantly.

Mr. Thomson: But I do not think £500 would go very far.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He would get his travelling allowance. As to the question of exhibits, there is mighty little room at the London Agency. We could not be expected to exhibit all the varied produce of the State. It has to be remembered that the Agent-General can send out a request for any exhibit he likes.

The Premier: If we are to cover anything like all our produce, the exhibits must necessarily be small.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, and we could not send samples of perishable products. The member for Avon expressed a desire to see the Agent-General's report. I do not know whether reports are received from the Agent-General.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would like to see the 1922 report, an advance copy of which the member for Katanning seemed to have obtained at the time.

Mr. Thomson: No, I received it out here.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know whether it was a report or whether it was merely a letter.

The Premier: I do not ever remember seeing one in this House.

Mr. Latham: On one occasion one was posted to me in London.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier rightly pointed out that the Federal Government were responsible for the selection of migrants subject to our officials' inspection. On the other hand, there are always many people willing to come out. I think our Agent-General, Mr. Angwin, can be left to see that the best type of migrant is sent out.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members cannot speak twice on the general debate, and if they propose to discuss the matter further they must deal with items.

Item—Agent-General, £1,500:

Mr. THOMSON: I am in accord with the suggestion that the Agent-General should be encouraged to travel about Great Britain in order to meet people. Travelling is costly in the Old Country, but even if he were able to do that, the Agent-General could not cover all the activities I had in mind when I mentioned the appointment of a publicity officer. The Premier stated that the Empire Marketing Scheme spent a large sum of money in advertising Empire goods. In company with the Honorary Minister (Mr. Millington), who opened a household management school at Katanning yesterday, I inspected the building and was surprised to find that the school teacher was so up to date that he had written Home to London to secure information, and on the walls of his school were displayed copies of the posters that are being distributed through the schools in the Old Country. Those posters urge people to purchase Empire products, but that does not help Western Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is out of order. He must discuss the salary of the Agent-General.

Mr. THOMSON: And I am pointing out the functions of the Agent-General by which he is able to earn that salary.

The CHAIRMAN: I can allow the hon. member to discuss the salary of the Agent-General as to whether it is adequate or not, but cannot allow him to embark upon a general speech in dealing with an item.

Mr. THOMSON: Then the only way I can overcome the difficulty is to move to reduce the vote by £1.

The Premier: You can discuss the salary of the Agent-General without moving to reduce it.

Mr. THOMSON: I move—

That the item "Agent General, £1,500," be reduced by £1.

Those of us who have visited the Old Country realise that once a person gets away from London, very little is known about Western Australia. No doubt Sir James Mitchell and the Premier, when they were Home in their official capacities, gained the impression that the publicity available was greater than it really is. I went to England as a private citizen and frequently I found it was not known that I was a member of Parliament. I had to make myself known and then I was able to make inquiries. Even the persons who are supposed to be migration agents for Australia referred me to Australia House when I asked if they were in a position to give me any information about Western Australia. I visited Australia House and I put the following question to the official to whom I spoke, "Suppose I come here and want to find out about Australia. What information will you supply?" The reply I received was, "We will supply you with any information for which you ask." I maintain that we should have a publicity officer who will be able to visit various towns and address meetings and visit the secondary schools. If we had such a publicity agent he could relieve the Agent-General, or work with him and go to various parts of the Old Country and encourage people to come to Western Australia, or to purchase our goods.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to confine himself to the question of the reduction of the Agent-General's salary by £1.

Mr. THOMSON: I merely moved that amendment to enable me to deal with the Agent-General's department.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is distinctly out of order.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Chairman compels me to confine my remarks to the salary, he will force me to adopt—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not permitted to make threats.

Mr. THOMSON: I merely wish to point out that the Agent General is not doing his duty by not going out to various towns. I had no desire to adopt that attitude.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not wander all over the place.

Mr. THOMSON: But you are compelling me to do so; you compel me to say that the Agent-General is not doing his duty to the State by remaining in London. He should go to the various towns, attend the agricultural shows and deliver addresses. There should be greater publicity than we are receiving at the present time.

The Premier: I think we should start a campaign such as that out here.

Mr. THOMSON: The Chairman would rule me out of order if I started such a discussion. If the Agent-General's conception of advertising the wares and products of Western Australian can be carried out for £19, he is certainly deserving of censure.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is now dealing with Item 13, which has nothing to do with the Agent-General's salary.

Mr. THOMSON: I am compelled to do so by your ruling.

The Premier: The Chairman is merely interpreting the Standing Orders. You cannot make two general speeches.

The CHAIRMAN: The Premier spoke generally in reply to the hon. member. Now the hon. member, on an item, is endeavouring to reply to what the Premier said. That will not be permitted.

Mr. THOMSON: Anyhow, I think I have accomplished my desire.

The Premier: You have given us all a headache.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope that more money will be provided and also that we shall get the report to which I have referred.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The member for Katanning moved to reduce the item by £1 for the purpose of conveying to the Treasurer his belief that the salary and remuneration paid to the Agent General were not sufficient. If the hon. member had confined himself to that, there would not have been any necessity to move to reduce the item. If the Premier has listened to the debate he will be convinced that there is a prevailing opinion that the Agent General is not adequately paid. The Premier will, therefore, take that as an indication that it is the desire of members that provision should be made for further remuneration.

Mr. Thomson: That is what I set out to do.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Then the hon. member tried to accomplish it in a clumsy manner. If I were the Agent General and read the report of this debate, I would feel somewhat sore about it. There was not the

slightest need for the member for Katanning to adopt the course he followed.

The PREMIER: I agree with the remarks of the hon. member who has just sat down. It is possible that when the debate comes to be read in cold print it will convey a wrong impression of the whole situation, and knowing Mr. Angwin's temperament, and his keen desire to serve the State, the tenor of the debate may be calculated to hurt his feelings. If the member for Katanning desired that the salary of the Agent General should be increased, he could have made the suggestion without following the course that he adopted and moving to reduce the item. It would have been just as effective if he had expressed his opinions without suggesting that the item be reduced.

Mr. Davy: He did it to emphasise the importance of increasing the salary.

Mr. Thomson: You know very well it was the only way by which I could do it.

The PREMIER: I know nothing of the kind.

Mr. Thomson: No one knows it better than you.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is talking nonsense. He could have said anything and everything without moving to reduce the item. The hon. member's sole desire was to make two speeches, and the Chairman of Committees could not vary or amend the Standing Orders at a moment's notice to meet the hon. member's wishes.

Mr. Davy: You are now getting in a second general speech.

The PREMIER: I very rarely transgress the rules of the House. I agree that the salary is not sufficient. I do not remember when it was increased but I am safe in saying that it has not been increased for about 20 years.

Mr. Davy: It ought to be increased.

The PREMIER: Since the increase was made salaries have doubled, and in some cases more than doubled, yet this one has remained stationary. I should say, perhaps, that provision was made by a previous Government for the purchase of a house for the Agent General. That house was sold as the result of a discussion I had with Sir Hal Colebatch in London.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You certainly wanted £3,000 a year to live in that house.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members are getting away from the subject again.

The PREMIER: I am merely giving information to hon. members. The Agent General's house has been sold and a house

allowance is provided. I agree that the Agent General's salary is insufficient.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item—Upkeep of Savoy House, £1,700:

Mr. DAVY: Does this item refer to repairs, land tax and so on?

The PREMIER: Yes, and ground rent, rates and taxes, electricity, heating, cleaning and so forth.

Mr. THOMSON: I understood we owned Savoy House.

The Premier: We are the ground-renters. In England the holder of a long lease is called an owner.

Mr. THOMSON: For how long is the lease?

The Premier: I should say for 50 or 60 years.

Mr. THOMSON: If we have a long lease of Savoy House, we might modernise the building a little so as to be able to show our exhibits better, even though the frontage is narrow. We ought to have as fine an exhibit as those of Queensland, New Zealand and Canada. The showing space could easily be made more extensive.

The PREMIER: I discussed that matter with the Agent General when in London. Widening operations have been proceeding in the Strand for many years, the plan being to widen the whole of that thoroughfare. The block of six or eight houses in which Savoy House is situated has not yet been widened, but notice of intention to widen is expected any day, and will involve pulling down, or at all events a slicing-off of, about 30 feet from the building.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Public Service Commissioner, £1,584—agreed to.

Vote—Government Motor Car Service, £6,656:

Mr. LATHAM: The vote shows an increase of £818. I understand that certain high officials have cars entirely for their own use, and that these cars are used particularly to convey them to and from their homes. Some of the officials make a trip to the country only about once annually, their cars remaining garaged for the rest of the year. Since Ministers of the Crown are to be seen going home in tramcars, the public servants in question might either provide cars of their own to convey themselves home or else pay tram fares.

Item—Wages and Overtime, £2,500:

Mr. DAVY: Following this item there is one for maintenance of workshop, motor vehicles and bicycles and hire of cars for all departments, £6,000. Does the £6,000 include some wages?

The PREMIER: The first item covers wages and overtime of mechanics and chauffeurs in the garage. The next item covers the cost of petrol, tyres, and general expenses of all kinds, including supply of petrol to various departments for their cars. The service for other departments amounted to no less than £4,185 for the year. Other departments are charged for cars. Petrol totalling 25,000 gallons was supplied to other departments at wholesale rates, this resulting in a saving of 3d. per gallon. Previously each department was supplied separately, but the petrol is now supplied in bulk from the garage at the foot of this hill.

Mr. DAVY: I gather the purchase of cars is a revenue matter. If the Government require additional motor cars, are these revenue items?

The Premier: Yes.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Printing, £45,536—agreed to.

Vote—Tourist Bureau, £1,909:

Mr. SAMPSON: The vote shows a net increase of £171, but of this amount £165 appears to be additional wages, which would leave £6 for the prosecution of the work of the bureau.

The Premier: No; £6 extra.

Mr. SAMPSON: Actually there is a reduced amount for the work of the bureau in making Western Australian resorts known.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The work is done jolly well.

Mr. SAMPSON: I agree that the work is well done. The Tourist Bureau is an excellent institution. The trips to the wheat areas, organised by the bureau, have created in many people a desire to take up country life. Has consideration been given to the need and opportunity for expansion of the work of the bureau?

The Premier: I think it is now doing as much as there is scope for; certainly it is well in the public eye.

Mr. SAMPSON: From the figures I infer that the highly beneficial work of the

bureau suffers from lack of sufficient finance.

Mr. MARSHALL: Have the Government definitely arranged a site for the housing of the bureau? I understood from a statement made earlier in the session that the bureau must be removed from its present site. It should be placed where it will be easily seen, will be easy of access, and will be provided with all needful facilities.

Mr. THOMSON: The revenue of the bureau for 1926-27 was £16, and it is estimated at £27 for the current year. Undoubtedly the advertising propaganda organised by the Director of the Tourist Bureau has caused our people to realise that Western Australia contains many places well worth seeing. However, without criticising, I think it should be possible to obtain a little more revenue from the institution. If the Tourist Bureau assists the Railway Department, the State Shipping Service, and other departments, the bureau should receive credit on the revenue side for the work performed. Such bureaux have performed useful work in the Eastern States and it would be a good thing if branches were established in Melbourne and Sydney in order to make Western Australia better known there.

Mr. MANN: Regarding the control exercised over Rottnest Island by the department—

The Premier: The Tourist Bureau does not control Rottnest; the director is merely secretary of the board of control.

Mr. MANN: Does he receive anything extra for the work he does in connection with the board of control?

The Premier: That comes under the heading of the Chief Secretary's department. I do not know whether he gets anything extra. At any rate, he is not overworked.

Mr. MANN: There is no reference to him in the Estimates for the Chief Secretary's Department.

The PREMIER: The officer referred to by the member for Perth has no control over Rottnest at all. The director acts as secretary to the board of control. Whether he gets paid by the board or by his department for carrying out those duties, I cannot say. The member for Murchison asked whether it had been determined where the bureau would be housed in the future. We

will not be launching out in the construction of a new Savings Bank for some time, so that the present location of the bureau will not be disturbed. In the circumstances no consideration has been given to the site for the new bureau. The member for Katanning suggested that because the Tourist Bureau's advertising brought revenue to the Railway Department and other departments, the bureau should receive credit on the revenue side. It would not affect the Treasury at all, although doubtless some officer of one department or another would be glad to see the revenue side of his department's figures increased in the way the hon. member suggests. Such credit, however, would simply mean duplicating bookkeeping entries for no benefit to the State at all. As to the suggestion by the member for Swan, there is no need to launch into a more extensive scheme of advertising or publicity in connection with the bureau.

Mr. Davy: Five people are employed there.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And they are all busy.

Mr. Davy: Doing what?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Doing good work.

The PREMIER: I think the amount provided on the Estimates is large rather than too small for the work done. I do not see any necessity to increase the expenditure. It is certainly one department that will grow and expand as the State progresses.

Mr. Sampson: It helps the railways.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But that is not its main object.

The PREMIER: I suppose it does help the railways, but most departments help each other. The bureau has been doing good work in providing information regarding our various resorts and thus attracting people from the other States and largely preventing our own people from spending holidays elsewhere.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think the work of the Tourist Bureau is adequately understood. The officials do a lot of work apart from advertising the beauty spots of the State. They give a fund of information to visitors who come to Perth and they are kept going all the time. The officers are able to advise people as to places of interest within the State such as the Porongorups, the wheat belt and so on.

The Premier: Visitors who arrive by sea are able to get the information that they require.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It is surprising how little our own people know about the beauties of the State. The officers of the bureau are carrying out work that is of great advantage to the State. The vote is not large for the work we expect them to do for us. We are told that Nornalup is one of the greatest natural beauty spots in the world. Now many people go there for their holidays. In the past few people went to Augusta, but now many go there. It would be utterly ridiculous, however, to allow the bureau to collect a proportion of the revenue of the Railway Department, or the State Shipping Service, merely because of the work it is doing. It would be equally ridiculous, merely to show increased revenue for the bureau, to indulge in useless book-keeping entries. It is useless showing revenue taken from one department and handed to another department, seeing that the money all goes to the Treasury in the end.

The Premier: And look at the duplication of book-keeping entries that would be involved.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Government were to agree to any such thing, they would merely re-establish a system that took years to break down. I presume the Director of the Bureau receives some remuneration for the work he does as secretary of the Rottnest Board of Control, just as former secretaries have been paid.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The suggestion has been put forward that the bureau has been treated in a niggardly manner. Has the Premier any particulars to show how the officers of the bureau are employed? There is the director, a head clerk and three clerks. The title of director is high-sounding.

The Premier: The salary is very low for the title!

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It is an insult to the title! If a business person wished to know the best way to get to some place, he would not necessarily require a director to tell him which train to catch. I hope there will be no increase in the vote, and while I do not care to move to reduce it, I would like to know what the clerks are doing. I do not think those clerks are over-worked and under-paid.

The Premier: I do not think so either.

Vote put and passed.

[Mr. Lambert took the Chair.]

Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £11,271:

Item—Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, and travelling library, £7,600:

Mr. DAVY: There is here an increase of £800. Could the Premier tell us what it represents?

Mr. SAMPSON: I should like to know whether advantage is being taken of the travelling library. It has been said that nowadays, owing to picture shows and other distractions, people are not reading as much as they used to do.

The PREMIER: In the years prior to the war, indeed right up to 1915, the grant for the Public Library was £7,600, the figure here set down. It was the stringency of the war years that resulted in its being reduced. Certainly for many years now the Public Library has been starved. The supply of new books has not been kept up, and books that needed re-binding have had to be neglected. This increase of £800 is only restoring the vote to what it was for 1915. Ever since I have been in office the trustees have been pressing me for an increased annual vote, and I am glad that at last we have been able to grant their request. As for the travelling library, although people in the city may not be reading as much as ever, I think those in the country are doing so. Some hundreds of cases of books go out to country libraries during each year. They are of great assistance to country people.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I wish the people of the country knew they could have these books. Many of them know nothing about it. It is a great convenience and comfort to people in remote districts to be able to get these books sent out to them on their paying freight one way. I wish we could make everybody in the country understand that. I think this facility should be warmly encouraged.

Item—Law Library, £100:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Year after year this seems to remain stationary at £100. Has the Premier not had applications in respect of increased requirements?

The Premier: No, we have been able to meet their requirements with £100.

Mr. DAVY: Whilst perhaps the Public Library might be classed as a luxury—personally I should hesitate to so designate it—this law library is an absolute necessity. It is there, not only for members of the legal profession, but also for judges and for members of Parliament. It is in a very deplorable state at present. I ask the Treas-

urer to keep a friendly eye on this library and realise that it is, part of the essential services of the State that the library should be maintained in proper condition. The text books are two editions behind, and some of them, like some of the law reports, are not there at all, although frequently required. This library is a State possession, exercising a State function, and should be kept in proper order.

Item—Kalgoorlie Mechanics' Institute, £100:

Mr. THOMSON: I should like the Premier to tell us why the Kalgoorlie Mechanics' Institute can get £100 per annum, when so many country mechanics' institutes can get no financial assistance at all.

The PREMIER: I am not able to say why this vote was initiated, for it has been on the Estimates as long almost as Kalgoorlie has been in existence, certainly over 20 years. They have a free library in Kalgoorlie, as fine as any in the city, and it serves a very big district. It is very widely patronised and it assists the public by lending books, not only to residents of Kalgoorlie, but also to those of surrounding centres.

Item—Zoological Gardens, £3,000:

Mr. NORTH: It is often said that the Zoo is not being properly maintained. What sum would the director like to have if he could get it? In other words, how far are we starving the Zoo? I should like to see the Zoo either properly maintained or closed up. We do not want to have these complaints made about its being starved.

The Premier: You can't stop the squealing in the Zoo.

Mr. NORTH: What would be required by the director to make a job of the Zoo. If he says, £20,000—

Mr. Latham: Give it to him.

Mr. NORTH: Not at all, but let us find out what is needed for the Zoo, as compared with what we are providing for it.

The PREMIER: The question is a poser. I have not discussed that aspect with the director.

Mr. Latham: It would be rather dangerous to do so.

The PREMIER: I should hesitate before asking his opinion. I do not know whether the Zoo is starved. No Treasurer would ask the departments whether they required more money. I have not had any request for an

increase this year or last year, though I believe I had one three years ago.

Mr. North: That is very good news.

The PREMIER: Consequently I assumed that the £3,000 was sufficient.

Mr. DAVY: Although I cannot claim official authority to do so, let me now prefer a request for an increase. I frequently visit the Zoo and I assure the Premier it is in sad need of funds. There is nothing sadder than to see that particularly lovely place spoilt through lack of sufficient funds to maintain it in decent condition. In the last 10 or 15 years it has become a most beautiful spot. The trees skilfully chosen and beautifully arranged have grown, and in the whole of Australia one could not find anything more beautiful than the collection of palms, and the water effects. It would entail an expenditure of only £900 or £1,000 a year extra to put the place in proper order. Nearly all the cages, fences, etc., were originally intended to be temporary structures: yet the director and the board have had to keep them going for many years. I do not agree that we should close the Zoo unless we can keep it in top-hole order.

Mr. North: It should be kept in fair order.

Mr. DAVY: It is pitiful to see some of the large carnivora—bears, wolves, dingoes, lions, and tigers—existing in wretched little cubby holes. The lions have just been given more freedom in the shape of a new enclosure about the size of this Chamber. Has the Premier been to the Zoo recently?

The Premier: I am a regular visitor and I think it is one of the most beautiful spots.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee are not concerned where the Premier spends his spare time.

Mr. DAVY: The Premier should consider whether he cannot spare another £500 a year for a start to put the Zoo in order. Some members have expressed ill-considered views about the Zoo, but I remember Mr. Angwin saying on one occasion that if there was not a Zoo the children of Western Australia would grow up without knowing what a lion looked like. So long as the lions and bears are given a reasonable degree of comfort, there is nothing cruel or improper in keeping them in the Zoo.

Mr. Latham: Fancy keeping them in captivity to show them to children!

Mr. DAVY: I admit it is wrong to keep them in unclean cages that are too small to enable them to take sufficient exercise to

maintain their health. It is possible that a move may be made to get private subscriptions that will materially help, but I suggest that the Premier should restore the grant of £3,500, at which figure it stood previously.

The Premier: I agree with you; I shall see what I can do.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Treasury, £19,749—agreed to.

Vote—Audit, £13,934:

Mr. THOMSON: It is a pity that the Auditor-General's report is not available. I asked earlier in the session when we might expect it, but I realised that the Premier had no control over the Auditor-General. Considering that four months have elapsed since the close of the financial year, it is strange that the Auditor-General's report should not have reached us, particularly as other departments, such as the Taxation Department, have furnished their reports. The Auditor-General should be in a position to submit his report earlier in the session. If he is auditing the books of the departments as the books of a private firm would be audited, then a month or six weeks after the ruling off he should be in a position to submit his report. If the Premier knows when the report will be available, I should like to be informed.

Hon. W. J. George: We should have it before this vote is passed.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes; it would be useful to have it before dealing with the Estimates. The Auditor-General is the watchdog of the State's finances.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The salary of the Auditor-General is not under discussion because it is provided for under special Acts. I desire to direct the attention of the Committee and the Auditor-General to the fact that it is most unsatisfactory for us to be discussing Estimates without having the Auditor-General's report before us. I read in this morning's paper that the Auditor-General of New South Wales had submitted his report. If that can be done in a large State like New South Wales it should be possible to do it here. If the reason for the delay in presenting the report is that the Auditor-General's Department is understaffed, we should be informed.

The Premier: There is no understaffing.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Then there must be some other reason for the report not reach-

ing us until late in the session. Last year consideration of the Estimates had almost been concluded before we received the report, but last year's report is of no value to us when dealing with this year's Estimates. The Auditor-General is the servant of Parliament; he takes no instructions from the Government.

Hon. W. J. George: He is protected in that way.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, by a special Act. It should be conveyed to him that we expect his report in time to discuss it with the Estimates, and if he is not capable with his present staff of presenting it in time, he should be given sufficient staff to enable him to do it. If the report is to be of any value to us in discussing the finances of the State, it should be before us now. I hope my remarks will be brought under the notice of the Auditor-General. I find no fault with his work; my only complaint is that the report reaches us so late in the session.

Mr. Sampson: And that minimises its usefulness.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It renders it valueless for discussion on the Estimates. I hope the Auditor-General will explain why his report has not reached us in time. The Auditor-General of Queensland presented his report long before this stage of the session. I hope the Auditor-General will have a sound and tangible reason to offer. He is the only authority we have to guide us as to the soundness of the State's financing and whether the Government have spent the money in accordance with the provisions laid down by Act of Parliament. It is idle for us to discuss what happened 12 months ago. We want the report up to the 30th June last in order that we may properly discuss these Estimates. That report should be here at the time when the Treasurer presents his Budget.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I endorse the remarks of the member for Mt. Margaret. The Auditor General's report is the most important document we can have to enable us intelligently to deal with the Estimates. I have before me last year's report of the Auditor General, which came in too late. It deals with many things we wanted to know, such as the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the Public Debt, General Loan Fund, the increase and decrease in debts, stores, etc. Concerning each department remarks are made which are more or less pertinent, and the report generally contains informa-

tion that one requires when dealing with the Estimates.

The Premier: I am not responsible for the delay. I have no communication with the Auditor General. I would not dream of approaching him, even about his report. He is an officer of Parliament and not a Government officer.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: Members will find from last year's report that as far back as 1914 surcharges have been shown in various departments. Evidently officers of the departments have not done right in the eyes of the Auditor General. There is no suspicion of dishonesty, but the Auditor General evidently feels that these surcharges should not have occurred. It is not right that this kind of thing should have been going on for 20 years, and that these surcharges have never been cleared up. The Government would do well to consider whether the principle upon which the surcharges occur should be altered or not. Either the officers concerned have not had proper guidance, or the Auditor General has misread the Audit Act. If the officers are not making mistakes, these surcharges should not be brought about.

The Premier: Did you clear any of them up during your seven years of office?

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I do not know that we had the opportunity. If we have not the right to request that the report should be here when we want it, can we not get that right? We should be in a position to deal with the Estimates on a proper footing. There is something wrong either with the Audit Act, which enables the Auditor General to take certain views, or with the conduct of our department. If mistakes can occur in one direction, they can occur in another.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier said he was going to bring down a Bill to deal with the Auditor-General's salary.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Generally speaking these surcharges are payments which have been made without proper authority.

The Premier: They can all be cleared up by Executive Council minute.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. The Auditor General is an officer of Parliament, and members are entitled to ask him for any information upon the audit he has completed.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: It appears that the Audit Department is understaffed. One

wonders whether the department which deals with the auditing of the books of country road boards is also in the same position.

The Premier: It is not understaffed.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Compassionate Allowances, £1,776; State Savings Bank, £46,078; Government Stores, £17,231; Taxation, £30,000—agreed to.

Vote—Workers' Homes Board, £16,128:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I cannot very well criticise this wonderfully managed department.

The Premier: It has always been one of the best managed departments.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I notice that a sum of £900 is set down for the Chairman. That is a new appointment.

The Premier: Mr Hardwick drew that salary as Chief Architect, but having been retired from that position, he has retained the salary as Chairman of the Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a new appointment?

The Premier: Yes. If you can call it so.

Mr. THOMSON: It actually means an increased expenditure of £900 a year. Mr. Hardwick is the right man in the right place.

The Premier: Portion of that salary will be paid by the Commonwealth, because he is also doing repatriation work.

Mr. THOMSON: With regard to the Federal housing scheme, has the Premier received any communication from the Commonwealth Government that they want our board to construct the homes as we have done in the case of war service homes?

The Premier: I have had no communication from them, but they would not do that until the Bill was finally passed.

Mr. THOMSON: The time is opportune to draw their attention to the question. Ours is a very efficient department.

The Premier: The Commonwealth know that, because we have done their work for some time.

Mr. THOMSON: The Federal authorities made a fine mess of the war service homes. If the housing scheme comes into existence in New South Wales, no doubt the Commonwealth Government will use the War Service Homes organisation there to carry out the scheme in that State. I want to avoid a similar thing in this State. The Commonwealth could not do better than

hand the work over to the Workers' Homes Board.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If they do not, the two departments will be competing against each other.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not want that. Now is the opportunity to communicate with the Commonwealth Government to the effect that we do not want the old blunders repeated.

The Premier: You are discussing a matter that has not yet become law.

Mr. THOMSON: But it will become law. Now is the time for us to take action. We know that the operations of the War Service Homes scheme were disastrous to those of our soldiers who were concerned. In the Chairman of the Workers Homes Board we have an excellent officer and a practical man. He was Chief Architect of the State for many years, and was responsible for the erection of many of our public buildings. The secretary and the officers pulled the War Service Homes Commission out of an unholy mess, and placed them in an excellent position. Western Australia is to be congratulated on its efficient board. The Premier might intimate to the Commonwealth that we desire to avoid duplication of offices.

Item—Incidentals, £1,750:

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: This item includes a sum of £280 for motor upkeep. Later there is an item for the purchase of a motor car at £250. Surely £280 is not to be spent on the upkeep of one car?

The PREMIER: There are more cars than one; inspection is continually going on.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £182,810:

Item—Parks, Recreation Grounds, etc.—Grants for maintenance and improvements—King's Park Board, £2,400; Nornalup, £100; other grounds, £150:

Mr. THOMSON: I take no exception to the amount of £2,400 for King's Park, this being a national park; but I wonder why Nornalup should be selected to receive £100 while other grounds collectively are to receive £150. Some country districts desire to establish parks. Will they be permitted to participate in the £150?

The PREMIER: Nornalup is an extensive area which has lately come under the control here indicated. Nornalup is visited by con-

siderable numbers now; the railway will shortly be finished, and therefore it is desirable to spend a little money there. The £100 is not to be expended on a park, but as salary for a part-time caretaker, there being no local authority and trees having been destroyed by visitors and campers.

Item—River pollution, investigation, £10:

Mr. THOMSON: This seems a small sum to provide for such an investigation. Have the Health Department been following the matter up, and do they consider that they have arrived at a solution of the problem of the growth of algae in the river? If so, the information would be useful to other places.

The PREMIER: This item has nothing to do with the general question of algae in the river. For some years it has been agreed that the solution of that difficulty is the dredging and reclamation of the East Perth swamp lands and the deepening of the channel with consequent increase of flow to carry away the material responsible for the algae. The item refers to the carrying-out of investigations suggested by a member of the City Council.

Item—Albany Centenary, £100:

Mr. A. WANSBROUGH: I wish to express the Albany people's gratitude for the Premier's action in connection with the Albany Centenary, and their appreciation of the officer in control of the exhibition held at Albany, Mr. Anderson. I hope some consideration will be extended to him, as for many years he has been a temporary officer. There has never been a better advertisement for Albany than the exhibition, which included many important items.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I asked a question to-day on this subject, prompted by some people who want to know whether the Albany Centenary was on the same conditions as the Perth Centenary. I had no idea of objecting to the grant.

Item—Workers' Compensation Act, Medical Referees, £75:

Mr. THOMSON: This item shows an increase of £67, last year's expenditure under it having been £8. What is the reason for the increased vote? Have there been disputes between medical men, or in connection with the certifying of injuries to workmen under the Workers' Compensation Act?

The PREMIER: There have been differences of opinion between medical officers in

connection with the operations of the Workers' Compensation Act and the disputes have had to be referred to the medical referee. The expenses of the referee have to be met out of funds appropriated by Parliament. Disputes have arisen in connection with the medical certificates as to the incapacity of a worker under the provisions of the Act. Quite a number of cases have been taken to the board of referees.

Item—Federal-State finance proposals—Amount to be placed in suspense until agreement becomes binding by law and then to be appropriated, £350,000:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I presume the Premier will set aside a proportion of the amount month by month otherwise the balances will be affected. Up to the present, I do not think any amount has been set aside for the trust fund.

The PREMIER: I think the payments will be made half-yearly.

Item—State Savings Bank—Proceeds of purchase of Barrack-street site—Amount to be placed to a suspense account and applied (a) towards the cost of resumption or purchase of land for central Government offices if proceeded with; (b) in erection of further Government office buildings, £40,000:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under the item dealing with the Federal-State financial proposals, the Government cannot operate on the money because it is to be placed in suspense, but when we come to the item relating to the State Savings Bank, the £40,000 may be used by the Government. I notice that a board has been appointed to advise the Government as to a site suitable for the erection of public offices. I hope the board will be advisory only in respect to the site.

The Premier: That is all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The site should not be determined without careful consideration.

The Premier: My view is that no site for a proposed building to house the whole of the Government departments should be decided upon until Parliament has been consulted. In fact, I would not dream of doing it without bringing the question before Parliament.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We should not adopt any such proposal without considering whether we could finance it, and without imposing an additional bur-

den upon the people. Tremendous economy would be effected if the Government departments could be housed in one building; it would make for smooth working as well. As the item is worded in the Estimates, the Premier could spend the £40,000,

The Premier: Yes, in either of the two directions indicated.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think we should erect any more public buildings. It would be a waste of money to put up small buildings all over the place. The Government have added tremendously to the accommodation available. When we took over the old post office buildings, much additional space was made available. I hope the Premier will not spend another penny in erecting Government offices until it has been decided what shall be done for the future.

Mr. LAMOND: I notice there is an item referring to an aeroplane landing ground at Marble Bar for which the Government provided £50.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss that matter because no funds are provided on the Estimates for this year.

Mr. LAMOND: That is why I wish to draw attention to it.

The PREMIER: I know the hon. member is not in order in discussing it because there is no provision on the Estimates for this year. The £50 spent last year represented a small grant by the Government to provide a landing ground at Marble Bar, because that centre is off the aeroplane route.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Premier is out of order.

The PREMIER: That is so. I will be able to explain the position on another occasion. If we had aeroplane landing places in other parts it would be a good thing for the country generally, particularly when accidents occur, for it would enable the aeroplanes to land at centres off the main route. It was an illness that gave rise to the provision of the grant for Marble Bar.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would not object to the expenditure in the slightest, but I think the Federal Government should do this work.

The PREMIER: But they will not do it. Regarding the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that we should not erect any new buildings in different parts of the city, I agree with his contention, because that procedure makes for inefficiency and want of proper control. Although the wording of the item would enable the Government

to spend money for either of the two purposes set out, it is not our intention to proceed with the erection of any buildings during the financial year. I believe we ought to get our departments housed in one central block if we can. It will probably cost a lot of money, but by vacating offices in centrally situated parts of the city, we should be able to get substantial returns that ought to be sufficient to meet the interest on the cost of a new building. That is what we ought to aim at. In the meantime it is not intended to spend any of this money upon additional buildings.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The vote empowers the Premier to buy land for building purposes, but the Premier has indicated that it is not intended to erect any buildings just yet. For the purchase of land of sufficient area for a building in which to house our Government departments, £40,000 would not be much.

The Premier: No, it would be only part of it. It is not suggested that it would be sufficient.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That is what I thought; it might suffice for the deposit. I believe in housing all our Government departments under one roof. The sooner we set about it, the better.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—State Accident Insurance Office, £3,316:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is not new, for it was on the Estimates last year. I admire the Premier's courage. He went ahead and did the job he wanted, and then submitted the estimate of expenditure to Parliament. It was passed last year.

The Premier: We have had to carry on.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You certainly had to take some risk. The other day it was announced by the Minister for Mines that £31,000 was to be paid to relieve the mining companies of the insurance risk under the Workers' Compensation Act.

The Premier: Under the third schedule. Not accidents, only diseases.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Surely that will not take £31,000!

The Premier: Yes, that is the £4 10s. per cent. charge under the third schedule.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I noticed that while the Minister said it was only

for one year, the mining company directors in London thanked the Government for having undertaken to pay the premium for all time. It was not meant to be for all time, was it?

The Premier: No, only for one year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier had to take the risk under the third schedule, for it is a cumulative risk, which the companies could not be expected to take. The Government will have to accept it. What I have seen of the disease convinces me there is no escaping responsibility for its attacks.

The Premier: We are trying to put many of the sufferers out on the land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We would save a great deal by getting them to go on the land. They cannot stand hard work, of course, but they could run sheep or stock, or something of that sort, on small blocks in the South-West. That would give them a chance to make good, and I should think it a better way of spending the money than to spend it in the way we shall have to do under the third schedule. Certainly the mining companies cannot pay it. The Minister for Mines said that if they had to pay it, it would mean the closing down of three more mines. It is a tremendous burden, coming on top of the accident risk.

The Premier: Which is now well over £3.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is no escape for the Government from paying the money, since we have passed the Act.

The Premier: I think Parliament will furnish it this time.

Mr. Mann: King of optimists!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: However, since the Premier will disobey the law of the land—

The Premier: Having disobeyed it, I must go on disobeying it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I suppose the proper thing to do is to put the Government out of office. If the law of the land is disregarded by the Government, out they go, as indeed they should. I want to strike out this vote. If we do that, the Government will have no alternative to resigning. I hope we shall be successful.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Premier had better renort progress.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier was determined to run this insur-

ance office, and he went on spending State money without appropriation. Last year he got appropriation for the payment of salaries and expenses, but no authority to charge up losses or to make payments to those who insured with the Government.

The Premier: We have not made any losses at all, so far.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You have been in the fortunate position of being able to make people pay sufficient to cover all losses. It is a pity that we have to consider this vote in view of the fact that Parliament has said there shall be no State insurance office. The Premier has not appointed a manager; he has asked the Government Actuary to take charge of the department temporarily, so I conclude he is expecting the measure to be defeated. I protest, as I did last year, against this division appearing on the Estimates, because I disapprove of the Government establishing an insurance office without the authority of Parliament. The fact that we have a Bill before us providing for State insurance does not justify the Government in including this division in the Estimates.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Apparently the Premier has no alternative to making provision for the State Insurance Office, notwithstanding that Parliament rejected his Bill last year. Anywhere in Australian politics some years ago it would have been regarded as reprehensible for any Government to spend money in defiance of the decision of Parliament. Parliament discussed the matter at great length and rejected the Bill, and for the Government to go on incurring the expenditure—

The Premier: It should not have been rejected.

Mr. Withers: That was the weakness of the whole position.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I supported the Government in their endeavour to legalise the transaction, but if there were a vote on the principle involved, I should be against the Government. The Government are not doing the right thing, and Parliament should not support a Government who spend money in defiance of Parliament. After we had passed a law making insurance compulsory and when the private companies would not accept the risk, it was the duty of the Government to make provision. When the Bill was rejected the

Premier still had to carry on. Still it is not right to support the Government's action. If the Committee struck out the item, the Government would have to resign.

Mr. Kenneally: That would be very bad for Western Australia.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I hope the Government will get sufficient authority this session to cover these items and make provision for the cases mentioned in the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act for which the private companies would not cater. Still, I resent the action of the Government in spending money against the wishes of Parliament. It is unconstitutional and should not be tolerated.

Mr. DAVY: If this division be passed there is no reason why the Government should bother about getting a Bill through Parliament to authorise State insurance. I do not know why the Premier should have brought down the Bill.

Mr. Kenneally: To give you a chance to do the right thing by the Government.

Mr. DAVY: I do not know what the hon. member means; I never can quite understand the meaning of his interjections. The Premier has always impressed me as being one who believes in constitutional government. He brought down a Bill asking for authority to do a certain thing, and the Bill was rejected. Now he is asking Parliament to authorise him to carry on the work. He has the necessary support to carry the vote, and if his State Insurance Bill does not become law, I suppose next year we shall find a similar item on the Estimates again, and so on indefinitely.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is not going to be in office indefinitely.

Mr. DAVY: Well, so long as he is there. I cannot imagine why he should not persist in doing anything he pleases without legislative authority and without bothering about passing laws to legalise his action.

The Premier: I have some little authority from this House.

Mr. DAVY: But, unfortunately, for the Premier on this occasion, and fortunately on other occasions, this House has not the final decision. The laws have to be approved by both Houses. I have yet to hear the Premier declare openly that he is prepared to defy the Constitution.

The Premier: I am not; I am a real constitutionalist.

Mr. DAVY: I believe the Premier has always pretended to be.

The Premier: I have been driven against my own wishes and desires into this position.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are very sore about it.

Mr. DAVY: When the position was created by the Government I said we had made a supreme mess of compensation for miners, and the present position proves it conclusively. We have the delightful spectacle of the Government paying to themselves the premium due by employers of men subject to miner's disease, in order that the Government might pay out the compensation to the men.

The Premier: No, it is legitimate assistance to the mining industry.

Mr. DAVY: The Premier might call it that, but what a tangle and what a round-about method of compensating the men who are suffering, not in the interests of the present mine owners, but in the interests of mine owners of the past! Why not pay them out of Consolidated Revenue, instead of taking the money out of one pocket, putting it into another, and then paying it to the miners?

The Premier: It is something that has accumulated over a long period, and why should it come out of revenue?

Mr. DAVY: Then where is it to come from?

The Premier: If it has accumulated over many years, why should the revenue of this year meet it?

(Mr. Panton took the Chair.)

Mr. DAVY: The Government this year have paid the premium for the employers. I suppose it comes from the grant given by the Federal Government for the year. We have taken the money out of that grant and paid it into a Government fund, and now we take it out of that and distribute it amongst the miners in the form of compensation. A more clumsy method of dealing with the situation it would be hard to imagine. I do not say that the payment of the premiums is a clumsy matter, merely the method by which the payments are made. No one will deny that the situation ought to have been foreseen many years ago.

The Premier: The Scaddan Government tried to meet it 15 years ago, but another place threw out the Bill.

Mr. DAVY: One is always being met with the statement that such and such a thing ought to have been done 20 years ago.

We cannot vote in favour of this sum. Parliament has once refused to sanction the establishment of a State Insurance Office, and another attempt is being made to legalise it by a second Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in discussing proposed legislation under this vote.

Mr. DAVY: There is a Bill before Parliament to legalise this act of the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in discussing the matter under this vote.

Mr. DAVY: It would be an extraordinary thing if this side of the House voted in favour of this expenditure.

The CHAIRMAN: If members were allowed to discuss legislation on these Estimates, they would soon find themselves dealing with the State Insurance Bill.

Mr. DAVY: How can we vote money for an illegal purpose?

The PREMIER: I do not wish to cover the ground that was covered last year. If I replied fully to members I should be compelled to traverse the history of the establishment of this office. We had to bring down the vote this year. I regret that another place did not give its approval to the Bill that was brought down last year. Had it done so it would have avoided any semblance of illegality which may appear in connection with this particular vote. The amount appeared on the Estimates last year in anticipation of the passing of the Bill then, and it appears this year in anticipation of the passing of the second Bill.

Mr. Mann: Will this be the last occasion?

The PREMIER: I hope and believe so. Surely another place will realise the true position! I hope this will be the last time members will have to complain about the legality of the position.

Mr. ANGELO: I wish to raise a point of order. Under the Constitution Act, 1889, Section 72 sets out that "after and subject to the charges hereinbefore mentioned all the Consolidated Revenue Fund shall be appropriated to such purposes as any Act of the Legislature shall prescribe." Can you, Mr. Chairman, under the Constitution Act, allow this vote to be put to the House?

The CHAIRMAN: My function is to administer the Standing Orders of the House and not the Constitution of the State, which is a matter for the Crown Law Department.

The Premier: Take it to the High Court.

Mr. SAMPSON: In view of the remarks that have been made, will it be possible to defer consideration of this vote until the Auditor General's report has been received?

The Premier: That has no bearing upon it. The Auditor General deals with the accounts.

Mr. SAMPSON: Is he not concerned with the propriety or legality of this proceeding?

The Premier: The legality of it has nothing to do with the Auditor General.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hoped for some relief from that quarter. Have I your assurance, Mr. Chairman, that it is in order?

The CHAIRMAN: I am not here in the capacity of a legal adviser, but to administer the Standing Orders.

Mr. SAMPSON: In view of the Premier's explanation I shall not pursue the subject.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	..	12

Majority for .. 4

AYES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lamond
Mr. Collier	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munroe
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Rowe
Mr. Heron	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Latham
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Lindsay
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mann
Mr. Davy	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. North

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Millington	Mr. Thomson
Miss Holman	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Sleeman	Mr. E. B. Johnston
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Troy	Mr. George

Vote thus passed.

Votes—Metropolitan Market Act, 1926, £500; Commonwealth Grants, £365,905—agreed to.

Vote—Forests, £23,874:

Mr. SAMPSON: Recently I brought forward the question of the commercial acacia, or broad-leaved wattle, which offers opportunity for exploitation. Has the Premier discussed the matter with the Conservator of Forests?

The PREMIER: I have not yet done so, but I will do it.

Mr. LAMBERT: What gives one most concern in connection with this vote is the sandalwood question. Can the Minister furnish an indication as to how sandalwood getters are likely to fare during the coming year? The distance of hauling now makes the getting much more expensive, and I feel sure the Government will be reasonably sympathetic towards the request that the amount paid to getters be considerably increased.

The PREMIER: The question of orders for next year will not be dealt with until January, and there may not be any orders. The sandalwood position is now much more uncertain than it has been for years. I do not know that next year anything like this year's tonnage will be ordered. South Australia has come into the sandalwood trade as a keen competitor. Last year I had a conference with the South Australian Minister for Forests, and we arrived at an understanding for this year's operations, and also agreed to meet again before the close of the present year to discuss next year's position with a view to the two States arriving at an understanding as to output.

Mr. Thomson: Are we and South Australia the only States producing sandalwood?

The PREMIER: Yes; but South Australia this year produced 2,000 tons as against practically nothing previously. The seriousness of South Australian competition is therefore readily appreciated, particularly in view of the limited demand in China. For the present the question of price cannot be dealt with.

Mr. CORBOY: I sincerely trust that the desirableness of looking after prospectors will not be lost sight of. I hope the Premier will bear in mind that the pulling of sandalwood is of considerable benefit in keeping prospectors in the field. If next year's output is to be restricted, I hope prospectors will receive as much consideration as can be given them. Less harm would be done if the man who does nothing but pull sandalwood were affected instead of the man who uses sandalwood getting as a means

of keeping himself in the field as a prospector.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I sympathise with the Premier in the position that confronts him. It has always been so. Something happens and then the Premier is expected to undertake something to provide against the extra cost to the getter. I do not know how the Premier will do it. If we are to preserve our industry at present prices we shall have to hold off for some time. I suppose it is the sandalwood from South Australia that has hit us so hard.

The Premier: That and the position in China.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: China can take about 6,000 tons only a year.

The Premier: I am not pressing for the royalty for the time being.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope we shall be able to retain the trade because it is invaluable to the prospectors in the back country. It is the one legitimate direction in which we could hold the trade against a decent price. For 50 years we have allowed them to get the timber at a low figure before we secured an increase.

The Premier: It is so important that South Australia does not want to compete with us.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We do not want to lose the trade. I hope the Government will do all they can to keep it going but we cannot be expected to hold timber on the wharf for an unlimited time.

Mr. Corboy: No one would expect that.

Mr. LAMBERT: No reference is made in the Estimates to the work carried on at the University in connection with tanning products.

The Premier: That does not come under this Vote.

Mr. LAMBERT: Can the Premier indicate under which Vote it comes?

The Premier: I cannot say offhand.

Mr. LAMBERT: I want to discuss one phase that is of all-importance to the State.

The CHAIRMAN: You cannot discuss it under this Vote.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.5 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 26th October, 1927.

Bills:	Page
Traffic Act Amendment, Assembly's amendment	1387
Electoral Act Amendment, Com.	1388
Land Tax and Income Tax, Assembly's Message	1389
Loan and Inscribed Stock (Sinking Fund), 1R	1390
State Children Act Amendment, 2R	1390
Hospitals, Com.	1402

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

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Assembly now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; Hon. A. Lovekin in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2.—Strike out all the words after "by," in the second line, and insert in lieu thereof "inserting after the word 'area,' in line seven of paragraph (c) of Subsection (2) thereof, the words 'and the Board controlling Reserve A1720 (the King's Park).'"

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The amendment suggested by the Legislative Assembly brings the Bill into line with the original intention. It was framed in the way suggested by the Assembly at the outset but, as the President knows, in deference to the views of the Speaker, the Bill was altered to omit the words, "King's Park Board" in lieu of which "Reserve A1720"—which is King's Park—was inserted. The contention of the Speaker was that the inclusion of the name of the park in the Bill created another authority and it followed there must be an appropriation of revenue, in which event, he contended, the Bill could not originate in the Legislative Council. The Speaker was quite wrong, because the provisions of the Traffic Act specifically set out that the fees to be collected shall be placed to the credit of a trust account, so that the money does not go into Consolidated Revenue at all. Wiser counsel have prevailed apparently, because the same gentleman was in the Chair when the Assembly passed the third reading of the Bill in its amended form, and in the form we originally intended. Had the Bill been