

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 26th January, 1909.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Fremantle Public Hospital—Report of Board of Management to 30th June, 1908.

By the Colonial Treasurer: Papers relating to the loan of £1,500 to Mr. P. Stone from Savings Bank Funds on security of certain property at Walkaway.

QUESTION—LANDS DEPARTMENT DECENTRALISATION.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Is it the intention of the Government to put the policy of decentralisation of the Lands Department to one portion of the State only, as approved by the Public Service Commissioner?

The PREMIER replied: No; the scheme will be extended as circumstances warrant.

Mr. ANGWIN: I regret the rules of the House did not permit me to ask the question as I gave notice of it, because the matter is of such importance.

QUESTION—MINING, FOREIGNERS EMPLOYED.

Mr. TROY (for Mr. Gourley) asked the Minister for Mines: 1. Has the attention of the Minister been directed to the following report in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 21st January—

“The Language Test.—It has often been said that numbers of foreigners enter Australia, and particularly this State, by some means avoiding the language test. What appears to be a pronounced case of this nature was brought to light in the police court to-day, when an Italian named Antonio

Guerononi, employed underground at the Sons of Gwalia, declared his inability to speak or understand English, and an interpreter had in consequence to be procured.”

2. Will the Minister cause inquiries to be made into the statement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1. Yes; since notice of the question was given. 2. Yes.

QUESTIONS (2)—EARLY CLOSING PROSECUTIONS.

Mr. DAGLISH asked the Premier: 1. Is the Chief Inspector of Factories competent to conduct a prosecution under the Early Closing Act in which no legal technicality is involved. 2. If so, why is a solicitor employed for that purpose? 3. If the chief inspector is not competent, will the Government appoint some person to that office who is able to perform such a duty?

The PREMIER replied: 1. Yes. 2. In many cases under the Early Closing Act legal technicalities are involved, and in a batch of cases it is better that the solicitor should take them all rather than discriminate. No extra cost to the Government is involved. 3. Answered by No. 1.

Mr. DAGLISH asked the Premier: Is he aware that while some of the large shopkeepers in Perth are allowed to openly defy the Early Closing Act, small shopkeepers guilty of trivial offences due to inadvertence are prosecuted without a prior warning?

The PREMIER replied: No distinction is made between large or small shopkeepers in carrying out the provisions of the Act.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES 1908-9.

In Committee of Supply.

Department of Mines (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Resumed from the 22nd January, Mr. Daglish in the Chair:

Vote—*Mines Water Supply*, £19,289.

Mr. JOHNSON: It would be impossible to create a discussion on water supply

generally on this vote, but he proposed to move that the vote be reduced by £289 in order to make a few remarks on the number of administrations there were in connection with the water supply of this State. We had the engineers, clerks, draftsmen, stores and all the rest connected with the Goldfields Water Supply. At Fremantle there was a distinct organisation. Then, again, at Claremont there was another complete organisation, with engineers, clerks, stores, and all the rest.

Mr. Angwin: It is not so in Fremantle.

Mr. JOHNSON: If it were inferred that the officer in charge of the Fremantle Water Supply was not an engineer the officer would strongly resent it. In Perth we had another separate and distinct organisation, though it was under a board, and the Minister constituted the board. Then, again, for the water supply of mines we had another department. The time had arrived in the interests of economy when we should have a Minister for Water Supply, so as to concentrate the administration of the various water supplies under one Minister who could then considerably reduce the costs. For instance, the engineer for water supply and sewerage controlled areas practically covered by the engineer for mines water supply. Portions of the stock routes were under the control of the engineer for mines water supply, and other portions under the control of the engineer for water supply and sewerage, and it would be quite realised that as long as we had this separate control so long would we have high costs of administration. The only way to truly economise was to concentrate administration. If a Minister for water supply were appointed, and the whole of these different administrations placed under his control, the Minister could considerably reduce the number of engineers employed, and considerably reduce the cost of stores and the purchase of meters and the costs generally in the drafting and correspondence rooms. He moved—

That the vote be reduced by £289.

Mr. WALKER: The hon. member covered the line he had intended to take when he asked the Minister at the pre-

vious sitting to adjourn this vote. The supply of water for mining purposes was very unsatisfactory, more particularly as it related to the divided control. In Kanoona some mines obtained their water for mining purposes from the Goldfields Water Supply; others, a few miles distant, from the Mines Water Supply, and others, a few miles further away, from the Railway Department. There was a vast difference in administration without any particular regard to justice in places a few miles distant from each other. Why was there any difference between the rates charged at Broad Arrow and those charged at Paddington? This divided control created delay and dissatisfaction. If a deserving case for supplying water for some low-grade show was put forward, application had to be made to the Goldfields Water Supply Administration; but that department, having a hard and fast rule, would not take into consideration any ultimate good that might come about from a departure from rule and thumb methods; and if the Minister for Works were asked to make a special case, and if it were pointed out that in all probability it meant keeping a township alive, the Minister would reply, "It is no business of mine; I am running the scheme on a commercial basis. If the Mines Department wish to help you to do development, let them put a sum of money on the Mines Development Vote, and let that vote go towards recouping this department." That seemed to him to be the very height of absurdity. The State was ruining the country and not any one department, and what the State or the Government should have in view was the development of the country, not a particular balance sheet of any particular department. Admitted where good could be done by a supply of cheap water, the Mines Department should be able to say it was a valuable thing, it was a thing required and would repay the State the outlay in the first instance. But now before that could be done an immense amount of correspondence had to take place. There was a long and tardy correspondence between the Mines Department and the Public Works Department,

each quarrelling as to where the money should come from and in what books it should be placed. As a matter of fact it was only taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another, but the whole correspondence was as to which pocket the money should rest in. And while that was going on the prospectors became tired, they threw up their little shows and wandered elsewhere. That was a matter which was not helping the country and was doing an immense harm by knocking faith out of the miners. A similar thing existed with the Railway Department where shows were dependent upon the supply of water from the railways for purely mining purposes. The Commissioner of Railways could sit on them so to speak. He could say "These are my terms; I am not interested in the mines; it is not my interest to see whether the mines pay or not: I have the water to sell, this is my price and no matter what the Minister for Mines may say these are the conditions under which we shall let you have the water." Was it not a fact that this divided control existed? The Commissioner of Railways fixed his own price; it was not fixed by the Mines Department. There was the anomaly too that the Minister for Mines was also the Minister for Railways; but this was one of the matters in which he could scarcely interfere because it was a question of administration. Consequently the Commissioner of Railways so to speak had a free hand. The point he (Mr. Walker) was making was that the practice was wrong. The State he insisted should be run as a whole. There should not be these conflicts between the departments, one cutting the throat of the other, and this constant friction and constant correspondence which entailed such great expense. That state of affairs should be altered speedily. It was not the first time he had spoken on it. The time had arrived when some decisive steps should be taken for a remedy so undoubtedly needed. Unless efforts were made on the part of the Government to help in the development of the low-grade propositions one could not expect a flourishing mining industry. He was aware

what had been done in some directions, but why not in this? It was because the department was handicapped. One department stood as a stumbling block and each department thought it was a little empire in itself and would brook no interference from any other Minister in the Cabinet. The position was intolerable because of the real harm it did to the State apart from the harm it did to those individuals who required help. Why should not some special effort be made to remedy that state of things? No wonder there were complaints of the finances depreciating or going down when no step was made by the Government to assist in the development of the wealth of the country. Here was a wealth which was only awaiting development, waiting for just the slightest assistance. But no, it was not rendered because of the red tape and lack of common sense on the part of the administration. Selfishness, lethargy, and intolerance existed which he ventured to say would not be allowed in any other part of the world, unless it were some country like Turkey or Russia which were governed by red tape without adaptation to circumstances. Here was just an example of what lethargy, ignorance and slavishness on the part of departments could accomplish, and it was against that that he entered his protest. There were in all mining constituencies, shows which might be yielding profits and increasing the wealth of the country, many shows which would be developed by prospectors, men whose sinews and energy and enterprise was on the spot to develop that wealth if only facilities were given. The money would be made and spent here, circulated in the State and all this would be of advantage to the Government and would be for the welfare of the State. But no step was taken. He hoped sincerely, without going into further details, that steps would be taken to organise this department in such a way that special circumstances would always receive consideration especially when dealing with a subject of such importance to the mining industry.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: To a certain extent he endorsed the remarks of the

member for Guildford, when he spoke of the overlapping in connection with the Mines Water Supply and the water supplies under the control of the Public Works Department. In the Estimates there was a provision for certain stock routes under the Mines Water Supply, and yet it was found that the stock routes were practically going through goldfields where the water supplies were under the control of the Public Works Department. For instance in his district the engineer for the Mines Water Supply had control of practically the whole of that district. He had control of the water supplies right down to Port Hedland, yet we found the stock route running practically through the district, and within 10 miles of Port Hedland running from Condon to Whim Creek, was under the control of the Public Works Department, and the officer in charge was stationed at Broome. Economy could be shown by putting the whole of this supply under the one department. There was no doubt in his mind that the proper individual to control these water supplies was the Mines Water Supply engineer who was stationed at Marble Bar. The officer at Broome could not possibly look after the water supplies further down south: at least he could not possibly look after it as economically as a man on the spot would do, a man who was engaged practically the whole of his time in water supply business. The Minister should give the Committee a guarantee that this overlapping would be removed, otherwise he would vote for the amendment of the member for Guildford.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The arguments of the member for Kanowna in connection with this matter were difficult to follow. The amendment moved by the member for Guildford was more in the direction of bringing about more effective control and the placing of the various departments under one head. He had no desire to be drawn into an argument as to the merits or demerits of the management of the Goldfields Water Supply administration. That had no connection in any shape or form with the amendment moved by the member for

Guildford. His desire was that all these water supplies should be controlled by one department and that the Committee should vote on his amendment and show its sense of the views that he expressed. With regard to the special branch in question, it was created some six or seven years ago when it was thought that the Mines Department should have control of it, and this particular branch was taken over from the Public Works Department. The question had arisen since then as to whether it had done a great deal of work and as to whether it would not be wise now to again transfer it back to the Public Works Department and let them control it. His opinion was that if the branch were again transferred to public works control at the present time a mistake would be made. Hon. members would admit that the Mines Water Supply branch had done a good deal of work throughout the back country especially in the Pilbara District, where the country was interlaced with bore holes, and at distances of 10 or 15 miles it was possible for prospectors to get water. It was not necessary for him to enumerate the great amount of work which had been done in other districts. When all this was finished he was quite willing that the control should be transferred again to the Works Department. There might be some few instances where the work overlapped. The Works Department had asked the Mines Department to take control of the stock route. They had a stock route running along the coast from Broome, he thought it was, to Whim Creek and then south, and the Works Department found it necessary to station their engineer at Broome. They controlled that stock route. But he wished to point out that the engineer for water supply at Marble Bar not only controlled the work of the Mines Department, but did considerable work for the Public Works Department. Generally he carried out the local work required by the Mines Department, by the Lands Department or by the Public Works Department: so that any overlapping there was reduced to a minimum. He (the Minister) did not think that economies would be effected at the present time by the transference

of this department: although he quite agreed that the time was coming when the Mines Department would, to a large extent, have finished its work in respect to water supply, and when in consequence it might possibly be to economic advantage if they could allow the water supply to be again merged in to the Public Works Department.

Mr. HOLMAN: Personally he would not like to see any such change. There was no more valuable asset in Western Australia than a good supply of water throughout the goldfields. Credit was to be given to those in charge of the department for the manner in which they had assisted in obtaining water supplies for various parts of the goldfields. On the other hand there had been at times delay in responding to applications, with the result that considerable expense had been cast on the prospectors; an expense which could have been obviated by the expenditure of a few pounds on the part of the department. On some occasions months of valuable time had been lost to the prospectors in this way. In any part of the remote goldfields a well sunk and a supply of water secured was one of the most valuable assets that could be imagined. Such a supply might easily result in saving life, in addition to doing good work in respect to the promotion of prospecting round about the district. When the Labour Government were in office an application had been received from Yaloginda for a water supply; and the supply had been duly furnished within three weeks of the date of the application. As showing the value of a water supply it might be mentioned that when that particular application was made there were only 30 men at Yaloginda, whereas to-day there were from 250 to 260 men on the field. The water supply had undoubtedly been the means of opening up that place. But in contrast with the action of the Labour Government in providing a water supply the present Government were making a charge for the water supplied, notwithstanding that the expenditure on this supply represented the only public money ever spent in Yaloginda. The progress committee had offered to take over the control of

that water supply, and to keep the windmill and plant in thorough repair.

The Minister for Mines: Well that is all we want.

Mr. HOLMAN: The progress committee would gladly do it. Every few shillings out of pocket was a serious matter to the prospectors of that district. Men in these out-back places should receive their water supply without being called upon to pay a few shillings for it every week—money which could be far better spent in developing their properties. At Garden Gully the water supply was by no means satisfactory, and he was at a loss to understand why the Government did not provide a more permanent supply.

The Minister for Mines: It means considerable expense, and it may be that the place is only temporary.

Mr. HOLMAN: The place was by no means temporary for it had been worked for the past 12 months. If an adequate water supply were to be provided the place would very soon go ahead.

The Minister for Mines: In any case they have only three or four miles to travel for their water.

Mr. HOLMAN: Complaint had been made as to the inadequate water supply along stock routes. Of his own knowledge he could say that along the Peak Hill route there was not sufficient storage in the wells. The wells required opening up. A considerable sum of money had been spent upon this water supply, merely because the wells were not large enough in the first place: and although they had been tinkered with since, they had not been properly opened up. Men travelling stock, instead of being able to water their cattle in one evening had to remain on the well for perhaps two or three days. The position could be vastly improved. Generally speaking there had been sufficient money spent on the stock routes to give an ample water supply if only the work had been done properly. When the wells were being put in order it would be a very simple matter to erect whip-poles in order to facilitate the rapid watering of stock.

The Minister for Mines: And it will be as well to license the stockmen.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the wells were put in proper order the men would gladly pay some contribution towards the cost of the water rather than travel under existing conditions. Again, the people at Nannine had to pay about 12 per cent. on the capital cost of their water supply. If the scheme were paying, the local people ought to be given the advantage. The Coolgardie Water Scheme was costing the State nearly £100,000 a year, to which every part of the State was contributing. Yet not only was a place like Nannine contributing to the Coolgardie Water Scheme, but it was called upon to pay 12 per cent. on the outlay on its own scheme. Notwithstanding this, the richest mines in Kalgoorlie were being supplied with water at less than one-half the price paid by people at Nannine.

The Minister for Mines: Why do not the people of Nannine take over their water supply?

Mr. HOLMAN: So far as he knew they were not aware that the department was willing to allow them to take it over. However, he would be very pleased to place the proposition before them. He would strongly recommend that in all new centres a water supply should be provided at the earliest possible moment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Mining School*, £4,643:

Item, Salaries of lecturers, £1,915:

Mr. SCADDAN: One of the students at the School of Mines had made a complaint to him with regard to the lecturer on electricity and engine-driving, who received a salary of £300 per year. It appeared that that lecturer was also employed as consulting engineer to the Perseverance mine, and for this he received £3 a week. At the Perseverance mine there was a foreman receiving 15s. a day, another employee receiving 11s. 8d. a day, and an apprentice. It was thought that if this official of the department did not hold the position on the mine a permanent hand would be employed at a salary of £5 per week. It was contended that the official was doing another man out of a job. The student had also informed him that the same gentleman acted as

electrician to the Kalgoorlie Racing Club, and received £5 each racing day, or about £35 a year for the work. Previously this work was done by a Kalgoorlie electrician. The same official was appointed by the Government to the position of Government inspector of electrical work on the fields at a salary of £100 a year. There were many who had passed examinations at the school who would be quite eligible to hold that position, and it was not right that a lecturer who was receiving a permanent salary of £300 a year should prevent other people from getting the extra appointments which he held.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the case of many of the lecturers who were employed, the department were only too glad if they had other engagements as well, for the salaries paid for positions were not high enough to enable them to do that work and nothing else. That was only in regard to the majority of the lecturers. As to the case in question, he had no knowledge of it at present, but would make full inquiries and give all information possible to the hon. member. If after receiving an explanation he thought there was anything incongruous with regard to the case in question, he would be pleased to rectify it.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*State Batteries*, £78,687:

Mr. HOLMAN: The State batteries instead of being made and kept up to date, were gradually drifting into a state of disrepair and at the present time many of them were not giving the satisfaction they should. The Meekatharra battery had turned out more gold than perhaps any battery in Western Australia, except one or two, but it was in a most unsatisfactory condition now. These remarks of his would be borne out by the Minister, if that gentleman would only read out the reports which he had received from the manager. Many complaints had been received from prospectors. The whole bed of the battery was shaken, and it was wonderful that any amalgamation was brought about. At times the battery was absolutely dangerous, and he had heard that a practical man, one of the best

men on the Murchison, had left his position on the battery simply because of the unsatisfactory way in which it was worked. It was the duty of the State to maintain the most up-to-date machinery for mines in order to show the mining companies how battery work should be done. It was the duty of the Government to obtain the most up-to-date machinery for these batteries, and cease to follow the practice of putting up ramshackle machinery. A bad battery was an expense in more ways than one, for the upkeep, breakages, etc., ran away with a considerable amount of money. It was a pity the recommendations of the Batteries Board were not given effect to. A great deal of dissatisfaction had existed with regard to the regulations as to the working of the batteries, but certain alterations to the regulations had now been initiated, and it was hoped that thereby an improvement would be effected. The State battery system should be extended, so that all the necessary facilities were given to those who were prospecting for gold in the out-back districts. It was the custom years ago to place some thousands of pounds on the Estimates for the erection of State batteries, but it appeared that that item had now dropped out.

The Minister for Mines: Provision is made on the Loan Estimates this year.

Mr. HOLMAN: Instead of this vote decreasing, it should increase, because the more the system was extended, the more satisfaction would be given to the workers on the fields, and the better it would be for the mining industry generally. That satisfaction would never be given so long as we encouraged the erection of the old rattletraps now being put up. The system generally had worked wonders in many gold-mining centres. It had resulted in the opening up of many places, and making them go ahead, while the result, generally, had been greatly to increase the gold yield of the State. There was a question he had referred to before, and that was with regard to the active part taken by the managers of some of the batteries in political matters. There was no objection to the managers having the greatest political freedom, but there

was an objection to their devoting a considerable part of their office hours to political matters on behalf of the Minister or some candidate they favoured. They should not be allowed to use their positions to canvass for candidates or to influence the employes of the batteries to vote in a certain direction. The existence of such evils had been brought before his notice during the last few months. If ever such a state of things existed in the future, he would take stronger action than he was doing now. It was to be hoped that a word of warning now would be sufficient. Any Minister for Mines would always receive what assistance he could give in improving the State battery system, and any criticism he had to utter with regard to the system, was merely in the desire to assist the progress of the scheme, and by that means enable those engaged in the mining industry to get a better return for their labour.

Mr. TROY: The State batteries in the various parts of the fields were of a very motley description; some of them were first-class, some second-class, and some had no class at all. Unfortunately, this bad system was being perpetuated, for in many places the department were erecting batteries which were by no means up-to-date. Such machinery could never make the system efficient, and would only have the one result of increasing the cost. He felt sure this was the case with the latest batteries erected by the department. He admitted that the battery taken to Sandstone from Laverton was an up-to-date battery, and it was being erected as about the best. The Minister gave an assurance that he intended to erect all up-to-date batteries; that he was starting with Leonora and Menzies, and after that the engineer was to be sent to Boogardie.

The Minister for Mines: Starting at Coolgardie.

Mr. TROY: Yes, Coolgardie and Menzies and was then to go to Boogardie. He did not know if the engineer had been to Boogardie, because from what he read meetings were still being held there complaining of the battery not being brought up-to-date. It would be far better to sell the old batteries and buy new up-to-date

machinery. This would enable the cost to be cut down. In his electorate there had been some trouble in regard to batteries at the present time, and he had asked the Minister certain questions in reference to the matter. It seemed that the more questions one asked the more varied were the replies received. The batteries department could not be credited with consistency as to the excuses made why batteries were not working. He (Mr. Troy) had asked, in regard to the Lennonville battery, whether the Minister was aware that the prospectors and leaseholders at Lennonville were considerably inconvenienced owing to the destruction of the State battery? Had the Minister arranged for its re-erection, and if not, why not. The Minister replied that an engineer had been sent to put the plant in order; the damage, however, had been found to be greater than was at first anticipated, and this would somewhat delay the renovation of the battery. The engineer had been sent down to put the battery in order, and nearly two weeks later information came to hand from Lennonville that not only had the engineer not arrived, but the material to put the battery in order had not arrived either. Later on the Minister admitted that the material had not been sent on. The department sent the engineer to put the battery in order before the material was forwarded.

The Minister for Mines: It was necessary for him to go there to see what was required.

Mr. TROY: After the engineer had been sent along the Government found that they could not do anything because the insurance had not been fixed up. Had the engineer to go to Lennonville to find that out also? The last excuse was that insurance was not fixed up and that nothing could be done until this had been arranged. Could not the material be sent along for putting the battery in order? These excuses were paltry. They showed a lack of ingenuity on the part of the department, for they could not make better excuses. As far as sympathy with the prospectors was concerned, there was absolutely a lack of sympathy, because no effort was made to assist the pros-

pector in the locality named. The fact that the battery was destroyed to some extent by fire was not sufficient reason for the delay, for two months prior to the battery being burnt it was lying idle and no attempt was made to put it in order. There were thousands of tons of stone to-day waiting treatment, and the prospectors were being driven away from the locality.

The Minister for Mines: The battery crushed 536 tons in eleven months.

Mr. TROY: The Minister could not deny that during those eleven months the battery was idle because of maladministration. A man was sent up to put a plate on the boiler, and he was six months engaged in doing the work. Since last year there had been a vast improvement in Lennonville, other mines had been opened up, two or three mines from which large bodies of stone were being taken to-day had been opened up since that time. These provided sufficient stone to keep the battery going full time. Lennonville was not situated in the Menzies electorate, and therefore there was not that concern regarding the battery that there was about the Desdemona. The Minister could not deny that he made promise after promise, which he had not kept. He (Mr. Troy) was going to insist, as far as he could, on promises being kept. If there was no intention to keep promises, they should not be made. These promises were unfortunately made just prior to a general election, and six months elapsed before any attempt was made to fulfil them. The member for Murchison remarked that State battery managers took an active interests in politics and were decided partisans. He (Mr. Troy) did not know where the member got his information from, but his (Mr. Troy's) experience of battery managers was that they were partisans in the Menzies electorate, and there they were postal vote officers also, and raised the question of sectarianism. He knew the man who did that, and could bring the man to whom the battery manager spoke about it. Mr. Buzacott had a peculiar experience with this battery manager in the same electorate. A postal vote officer was chairman of a committee for

Mr. Gregory, and was a great partisan. He hoped there would be an alteration, or recommendations given to the officers to conduct themselves differently in the future.

The Minister for Mines: After your remarks made about Mr. Maxwell I do not intend to take any notice.

Mr. TROY: The remarks were correct, and more credit was given to remarks made by him (Mr. Troy) in the country among the prospectors than remarks made by the Minister. His (Mr. Troy's) remarks in regard to the Menzies election would be borne out by other members when discussing the vote on the Estimates. He had no objection to State battery managers having a mind of their own in regard to politics; every civil servant had a right to have a mind of his own in regard to politics. But he objected to the Superintendent of Public Batteries going through the Menzies electorate and doing his best to vilify the opponent of the Minister for Mines. This man was a violent champion; he objected to the superintendent also asking him (Mr. Troy) what he was doing up there. The business of the superintendent was not on electioneering matters, he was there to look after the department which he controlled, but unfortunately these officers forgot that, and went out of their way to be offensive to people whom they were paid to serve.

The Minister for Mines: His statement is that the boot was on the other foot.

Mr. TROY: Then one could presume that the superintendent was in the confidence of the Minister, and that they had discussed the Menzies election together, or could he have known anything about what just now had been stated. At the Palace hotel on the day of the Menzies election this officer was running about like a little poodle, carrying messages about the election for Glowrey & Co. This was the man who had been in charge of the public batteries. What qualification had this individual for the position he held. There were 30 applicants and they had no ghost of a show to get the position from the start. This man was chosen for the position from

the commencement, because he was a violent partisan for the Minister. This man crawled from Leonora to get this position. The officer had no qualifications for the position that he (Mr. Troy) knew of. He had been many years in the State and had great opportunities, but he knew of no place where the man had distinguished himself. There were 29 other applicants, and what about their qualifications? Did they not have equally good qualifications with Mr. Dunstan? The desire of the Minister was evidently to get in the office a **body** of men who would shield him; the Minister wished to get a bodyguard around him who would not let anything out to the public, who would not consider the public, but the Minister alone. That was why the appointment was made. There was no doubt the Public Service Act had been stretched in order to make this appointment. It was not in the interest of the State. What alterations had been made in the department since Mr. Dunstan had been there? He had occupied the position for 12 months; he sat opposite Mr. White for six months drawing his salary as a temporary hand; the office was made vacant, it was being arranged all the time for Mr. Dunstan, there was no doubt about that. There was a further complaint. If one went to Mr. Dunstan for some information regarding what had been done at a public battery the superintendent would reply that he did not know, as the Minister said that nothing could go out of the department without his sanction. Just so; the Minister was fearful that something would get out, and as a result he had got around him a circle of officers who would shelter him from the results of his misdeeds. Information denied to members was obtained from the man in the street who had got it from the batteries department. That was not in the interests of the State or the department. But this appointment was like many others made by the Government, not to be of value or service to the State, but to be of value and service to the Minister controlling the department. The mere fact that this man was a favourite of the Minister's and was loyal to the

Minister, was not sufficient qualification for the position to which he was appointed. There had been no improvement in the management of the batteries and no improvement would be hoped for from the officer recently appointed. There was a decrease of £8,035 in the vote; and a decrease of £6,320 for temporary labour. We knew there was need for improvement. Did this reduction mean that there was going to be that character of economy exercised that there would be no improvement brought about?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It was anticipated the cost of running the batteries would be lower because a great many improvements had been effected. The batteries at Black Range and Coolgardie had been fitted up with labour-saving appliances, and the mechanical engineer recently appointed, whose duty it was to go from battery to battery, had effected many improvements. For instance, the Pigwell battery, which could only crush seven tons per cord of firewood, after the engineer's visit was able to treat 14 tons per cord of firewood. Again, the steam pumps which were such a nuisance and were so expensive were being replaced by deep well pumps effecting a considerable saving in steam. Other reforms were effected which it was anticipated would mean a large saving. Had these improvements not been made it would have been impossible to make the reduced charges that came about in January of last year. We were previously charging on a sliding scale up to 14s. per ton, the average charge being 12s. 3d. per ton.

Mr. Underwood: Now you are making it up out of the sands.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No; we were paying cash out of pocket for slimes, which was never done before; and we were treating the sands on better terms. The battery charges were decreased 2s. per ton.

Mr. Underwood: And the cyaniding charges increased.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Nothing of the sort. In 1907 we crushed 95,280 tons at an average cost of 11s. 4.89d. per ton. In 1908 we crushed

95,578 tons and the average cost was only 9s. 5.75d. per ton. There was a reduction of 2s. per ton, and it meant to the customers of the mills a saving of £8,169. Again, the department only deducted 3dwts from the sands as again 3dwts 3grs. previously; and throughout all the treated sands at the batteries it would be found that about 1dwt. per ton remained, meaning that only 8s. went to the department for the treatment. In many cases the department had to treat sands only worth 2dwts. per ton, so that this was done at a loss. In addition the department paid for slimes whether they were treated or not on the basis of 75 per cent. on extraction. According to the nature of the sands the department gave from 80 to 90 per cent. on the residue that passed through the mill. As long as the sand was anything like clean the payment was on the basis of 75 per cent. In 1907 the department paid £27,540 for sands. In 1908, allowing £3,000 for December, a low estimate, it would be £39,641. That was £12,000 extra the customers of the mills received over their receipts for 1907, and this with the £8,000 reduction on battery charges meant roughly £20,000 more given by the department to the battery customers than in the previous year.

Mr. Underwood: Your customers do not know it.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Since the new scale came about there had been no opportunity to issue an official report. The revenue in 1907 was £53,471 from milling charges as against £45,302 last year, the tonnage being the same. That meant that we received £8,169 less last year, and the cash we paid away for sands was £20,000 in excess of the payments in the previous years. It took a lot of money to effect the different improvements and a good deal of time, and the department had not too much money and had to work economically, but the mechanical engineer was doing particularly good work and was making a good many savings especially in regard to the matters already mentioned. This was hardly the proper place to talk about battery managers interfering in elections, but he did not

know of any manager going beyond what any ordinary citizen was able to do in connection with the use of his franchise.

Mr. Scaddan: If we can prove that illegal postal votes were taken will you take action?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Decidedly. At Edjudina statements were made about the postal vote officer but they were entirely out of order and quite incorrect. A workman on one of the batteries had gone to a certain business place and told the people that if they did not support Mr. Buzacott they would be boycotted. He took no notice of this.

Mr. Scaddan: Is he on the battery now?

The MINISTER FOR MINES thought so. At Niagara he had only one friend, the battery manager. All the others on the staff were friends of Mr. Buzacott and one man voted illegally, and was a witness in the appeal case. This man was still employed on the battery though the opposition to himself was known. He hoped the man would still continue working on the battery.

Mr. Holman: Why were not proceedings taken against that man for voting illegally?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That was a matter for the Electoral Department. The man was out of the electorate for three months and came back a fortnight prior to the election, but the fact of this man's opposition to himself did not have anything to do with the man's employment on the battery. The Superintendent of Batteries had told him of certain interviews that he had had with members of Parliament. One member of Parliament especially was particularly impudent, and the Superintendent told that member that he would not stand the impertinence, even though he should happen to be a member of Parliament. When members assumed that kind of tone to public servants, the tone which they sometimes adopted in the House, one could understand why uncivil answers were given to those members. With regard to the appointment of Mr. Dunstan, he had a copy of the agreement before him, and he desired to draw mem-

bers' attention to one clause which was prepared with the concurrence of the Public Service Commissioner and that of the Superintendent of Batteries and himself (the Minister). This clause read—

"Notwithstanding anything in the above clause, this agreement shall be terminable at the option of either party at any time during the said three years on three months' notice in writing to the other party as the case may be to the said John Dunstan, and delivered to or left for him at the office of the Superintendent of State Batteries or to the Minister and delivered to or left for him at the department of Mines."

Mr. Scaddan: Who were the parties to that agreement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Public Service Commissioner, the Superintendent of Batteries, and himself.

Mr. Scaddan: Yourself or the Minister for Mines?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: As Minister for Mines.

Mr. Scaddan: Supposing a future minister wanted to terminate that agreement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Any minister could do that.

Mr. Taylor: What is this man's title?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Superintendent.

Mr. Taylor: You have no item here for superintendent.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He is being paid from the temporary labour vote.

Mr. Taylor: What is his salary?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was £600.

Mr. Taylor: I see his salary was set down at £450.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That was the original salary. This appointment was made at £575 when he was appointed as metallurgist.

Mr. Taylor: Has the superintendent never received more than £450?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The position was classified at £600. We were paying him as metallurgist, £575, and he started at that.

Mr. Taylor: When does the agreement start?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The agreement began on the 1st of January of the present year. It was at the desire of Mr. Dunstan that this clause was inserted, that either side should give three months' notice and there should be no compensation. It was the desire of the department to place a metallurgist in charge of the battery system: we wanted to give customers full value for all stone treated. The department were now building some Cassell plants. These plants had done splendid work at the Gwalia mine, and he was indebted to Bewick, Moreing & Company for having given him plans and specifications of these plants and also a good deal of information with regard to the work they had done. When introducing anything new like this, there would be some doubts as to whether success would follow, but in connection with these plants the department were confident of the best results, because of the experience of others. There was a good deal of difficulty with the filter presses at the start, and the department might have some little difficulty in connection with this new plant, but from the work that had been done at Gwalia, he was satisfied that the department would be able to treat the slimes at considerably less than had been done in the past with the filter presses, while as good extraction would follow. With regard to the reductions, these were appreciated, and particularly in his district. Some people might disagree with the proposal to introduce a sliding scale instead of imposing a fixed charge. However, the department had no desire to obtain any profit from the battery system: there was no desire to treat the batteries as anything in the shape of a commercial undertaking. Every person using a mill would pay according to the time he kept that plant, and generally, he thought the department were justified in saying that they were doing everything possible to encourage the development of low-grade propositions. He was quite satisfied that owing to the improvements effected, the cost generally would be much less than it had been before, and

the saving to the department would enable them to effect the reductions in the charges which had been mentioned.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Notwithstanding the figures read out by the Minister, he was still of opinion that there had been practically no reduction in charges of crushing, and that belief was held by many men who were crushing stone. The Minister pointed out that there was no reduction in the cost of cyaniding. The previous charge was 10s. per ton, and the present charge was 3 dwts., equalling nearly 13s. If that was not an increase in price, he did not know what was. At any rate it seemed like one. Then again, there was the system of merely paying a certain percentage in ore. As the Minister knew he (Mr. Underwood) had put ore through a battery which had given 93 per cent. extraction, but it did not matter what extraction was given now, the man crushing would only get 75 per cent. Under the present system of charges stone which left an ounce of gold in the tailings, would pay half an ounce for cyaniding when all the charges were totalled up. First the man crushing got 8 per cent. of his stone, then 75 per cent. extraction, and then there was deducted 3 dwts. When all that had been counted up, it would be found that the cost would be £2 per ton. Candidly, he could say that the old charges were far more equitable and better for the prospector than the present charges. The alteration in the charges was an increase and not a decrease in the cost of crushing and cyaniding. He was certain that cyaniding could be done more cheaply than was the case at the present time. He saw no reason why crushing charges should be below the cost, and the cost then made up in cyaniding. The actual cost he thought might be charged to each of these departments. Cyaniding certainly did not cost more than 1 dwt. and yet it was found the Government were charging 3 dwts. He was a very poor cyanider who could not get more than 70 per cent. extraction. The extraction given by the Government was not high enough. In his opinion the old system of charges ought to be reorganised. As far as the 20-Mile Sandy was concerned, the proposed new charges

would mean an actual increase in the cost of treatment. He had no desire to go into the question of the action that State battery managers had taken at elections, but when we came to the Attorney General's Estimates, he would ask a few pertinent questions, and would inquire why the State battery manager at Mulline was not prosecuted for acting illegally in taking postal votes.

Mr. Bolton : Do you not know?

Mr. UNDERWOOD : Yes, but we would have it officially. We knew a great deal, but when we were speaking legally it was necessary to have official information, just as the Judges who wanted to know officially that there was a dispute at Broken Hill. We wanted to know why people had been allowed to fracture the law and why no notice was taken.

Item, Temporary labour, etc., £41,967.

Mr. Taylor : The Minister had informed the House that the superintendent was being paid £150 per annum more than the former occupant of the position received. In the report of the Under Secretary for Mines, Mr. Dunstan appeared as engineer and metallurgist at a salary of £575. Now in the capacity of Superintendent of Public Batteries, he was drawing £600.

(Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.)

Mr. TAYLOR : According to the Minister the Superintendent of State Batteries had been in his present position only since the first of this year. For the preceding 12 months he had administered the State batteries under the title of engineer and metallurgist. His salary was now to be £600 a year, although hitherto it had been £450. He (Mr. Taylor) wished to know whether there had been any improvement in the system under Mr. Dunstan's control as engineer and metallurgist. In other words did the Minister's experience of Mr. Dunstan warrant the increase in salary? In the Mt Margaret district at least there had been no improvements in the system, and he (Mr. Taylor) had been put to more inconvenience within the last 14 months over the State batteries system as applied to his district than ever before.

The Minister for Mines : Only in respect to one point.

Mr. TAYLOR : Nevertheless it had been a great annoyance not only to him but to the department. The people of the Mount Margaret district had been continually writing to the department without getting answers to their communications. He wished to know whether this appointment was going to improve the battery system. If the present Superintendent of State Batteries were responsible for the several changes which had been made recently in the system it did not stand to his credit. Of course there was a possibility that these changes had been beyond his control—that they had been perhaps the results of previous contracts. He (Mr. Taylor) had no desire to make charges without having something authentic to support them; but he knew full well that there had been a deal of friction in the department since Mr. Dunstan had had control. That gentleman's manner of dealing with clients also had occasioned considerable friction, and his (Mr. Taylor's) electors had assured him that they had not received from Mr. Dunstan the courtesy which had been extended to them by previous superintendents. Hon. members knew that the battery system was not what it ought to be, and if the Committee were asked to vote £600 for the salary of the superintendent of the department, it would be necessary first to know that the State was going to reap some benefit by this appointment, some equivalent for the increased amount set down upon the Estimates. He understood that an agreement of engagement signed and sealed was in existence between the Superintendent of State Batteries and the Government; consequently if the Committee were to strike out this item the amount would have to be paid just the same.

The Minister for Mines : If you analyse these Estimates you will not desire to strike it out. The department has already shown a saving of £8,000.

Mr. TAYLOR : Probably this was at the cost of the service. If the Minister could prove that he was going to preserve the efficiency on an expenditure reduced by £8,000, all was well on that

score; but if the efficiency was to be impaired there would be no saving at all.

The Minister for Mines: A saving of £8,000 in charges to customers is also shown.

Mr. TAYLOR: The State batteries would have to be looked to to open up new fields. The better-known districts were all being worked and hon. members could not shut their eyes to the fact that the prospects of these better-known districts were becoming less bright. Whenever it could be seen that there was a reasonable prospect of showing a return for a five or 10-head battery, it was necessary that the Government should embark upon such enterprise. If the successes were only in the proportion of one to five it would pay the department handsomely, if not directly at least indirectly. In the past the State batteries had opened up permanent centres that had since become the home of flourishing communities. He hoped that whatever else the Minister might do he would not continue the system of two-head mills. Moreover, as he had already said, it was to be hoped that the Minister would be able to assure the Committee that the proposed increase in the salary of the Superintendent of State Batteries was justified on his past year's services.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the past there had been an engineer and metallurgist at £575 per annum, and a Superintendent of State Batteries at £450 per annum. To-day there was a superintendent alone at a salary of £600. For justification for the appointment one had only to turn to the quantities crushed. In 1907 the batteries had crushed 95,000 tons of stone; in 1908 also they had crushed 95,000 tons, and for this year it was estimated that they would crush at least an equal quantity, notwithstanding which the superintendent in his estimates was asking for £8,035 less than in the previous year. It was on account of the alterations which had recently been effected in the State mills that this reduction had been found to be possible. During the past year very heavy expenditure had been incurred in renewals, and this expenditure had been met from revenue. In this way the Men-

zies battery had had £189, Meekatharra £409, Burtville £370, Black Range £324, Yerilla £289, Leonora £97, Mulwarrie £191, Niagara £427, and Boogardie £641. And so on, practically all through the list. They had had heavy repairs paid out of revenue. Then there had been very heavy expenditure out of revenue to improve the steam power by putting in deep well pumps. We asked for £8,000 less for administration than was wanted in the year before. In addition there was a great reduction in charges equal to £8,179, and we had improved the conditions under which we bought sands and slimes. We paid £39,641 for sands and slimes in 1908, allowing £3,000 as a low estimate for December, against £27,540 paid in 1907.

Mr. Hudson: Of course you got the gold.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not yet; with the exception of the return from the plants at Norseman and Mul-line. We also got a little from Niagara. That was why he was anxiously pushing forward the erection of plants for the treatment of slimes at Leonora and Menzies, so as to get money with which to carry on this work. It was no use talking of old batteries. It would take £100,000 to replace the existing plants.

Mr. Taylor: When the department were putting up fresh plants they should see that they are standard plants and not rattletraps.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The standard would be maintained in every detail.

Mr. Troy: Is the Youanme battery a standard plant?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member knew that when the battery at Black Range was replaced by a new mill the promise was given that the old plant would not be moved from the district. It was 5-head of the old battery at Black Range that was shifted to Youanme.

Mr. Troy: Are you making it up-to-date?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It could not be a standard plant. We could not afford to throw away the old plant at Black Range. In regard to new

plants they would be on the standard system. Members would see that, though the item for labour was reduced, that for general supplies and maintenance showed an increase of £1,000 over last year's expenditure, but that was in order to bring the batteries to a better condition. The reduction in wages was owing to having got a good staff together, and having endeavoured to get as much out of the plants as was possible in the interests of the prospectors.

Mr. Heitmann: Can you give us any information in reference to the experiment with the producer-gas plant at Nannine?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The battery at Nannine was intended to save a large amount of labour. It cost over £4,000, but there were difficulties in erecting it. The reports in regard to the producer-gas plant had not been too satisfactory. On the other hand, according to reports, the plant at the Leonora water supply proved a great success. It was shown that it was most economical, and that it did its work splendidly. The cost of sending the coal over the great distance to Nannine was not satisfactory. The coal weathered considerably.

Mr. Heitmann: Cannot they use charcoal?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Charcoal was being used at Nannine and at Leonora where it was found to be much better. Coal would probably be better for a producer-gas plant in Perth, but charcoal was better in the back country where the plants were so far from the coal mines.

Mr. HEITMANN: At the St. George mine at Mount Magnet the cost of fuel used with the producer-gas plant showed a reduction of about 60 per cent. as compared with firewood. It would seem that these plants would thoroughly revolutionise the treatment of low-grade ores, and the Minister for Mines should have the operations of these plants thoroughly investigated. The Minister claimed that State batteries were not to be erected to compete with batteries already crushing for the public; but the Minister took a good deal of credit for

the fact that the State mill had wiped out competition at Menzies. There were batteries crushing for the public at Nannine when the State battery was put up there. So it was to be hoped the Minister would cease to look upon State batteries as being only to supply crushing facilities where none already existed. Prospectors had more confidence in State mills than in privately-owned concerns, so that the extension of the State battery system in districts where there were privately-owned concerns would mean greater interest in prospecting.

Mr. TROY: What was the intention of the department in regard to slimes from ore previously treated, the value in the slimes having been taken by the department? Was it intended to make a refund to the prospectors from whose crushings the slimes had been obtained?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Towards the end of the year the fullest particulars would be made known in regard to the operations of producer-gas plants. It would be wrong on the part of the Government to put up State batteries in any district where the prospectors were satisfied with existing crushing plants. In regard to the slimes of which assay values had been taken, according to promises previously made they would be paid for when treated, less cost of treatment.

Mr. TROY: The Minister had complained of an hon. member having been impudent towards the Superintendent of Public Batteries. That hon. member should be ashamed and should resign for being impudent, for resenting the dictation of a public servant as to what he should do in regard to an election.

The Treasurer: We will accept your apology.

Mr. TROY: Did the Treasurer know the hon. member? It was an extraordinary state of affairs when we had the Minister for Mines and the "superintendent for the suppression of Ministerial wrongdoings" discussing and discouraging in regard to political campaigns. One surely expected some good from this department, and we could hope for the brightest of promises. The Superintendent of Public Batteries was a violent

political partisan, otherwise he would never have received the position.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think that is a proper remark; it is not fair.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member is imputing a motive to the Minister in making the appointment.

Mr. TROY: Who made the appointment?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw the remark.

Mr. TROY: While withdrawing the remark, he desired to ask the Minister who made the appointment. If the Minister did so the appointment was illegal, for the Public Service Commissioner was the only person who could make it. Since the Minister said he made the appointment he would show his disapproval by moving—

That the vote be reduced by £1.

Mr. Taylor: If the amendment is accepted does it not prevent a discussion on the other items?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. TROY: In the circumstances, then, he would ask leave to withdraw the amendment, so that he could move to reduce the item "temporary labour, including wages of manager, etc., £41,967," by £1.

Leave to withdraw refused.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the amendment were being moved for the purpose of objecting to the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Batteries, support would be received from many members, including some on the Government side. The appointment was a very peculiar one. When dealing with the question of the purchase of the Ravenshorpe smelter he had referred to the whole business. At the time the smelter was purchased the officer in question was employed thereon. There had been a promise made to him that he should receive the position of Superintendent of Batteries, but he was first appointed engineer and metallurgist at a salary of £755 a year, and so placed in a superior position to the Superintendent of Batteries. As members knew, the then Superintendent of Batteries left the service, and Mr. Dunstan, after 14 months in

the department, received the appointment. There was ample room for discussion on this question, for if there were one item on the Estimates members should raise their voices against on principle, it was this very one. The Minister had said the appointment was made on the recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner. That could not be disputed, but it was peculiar how Mr. Dunstan received his first appointment as engineer and metallurgist. He intended to support the reduction as a protest against the appointment. There was no necessity to compare the capacity of the present superintendent with that of his predecessor, but the gentleman now holding the position had been previously working for private firms, and it was necessary for him to leave them. Whether or not he left them of his own accord he did not know. Mr. Dunstan was with Bewick, Moreing and Company, but he did not remain with them very long. The Government could not wax eloquent on the appointment of a man who had not been considered up to the standard of a private firm. What did the officer do as metallurgist?

Mr. Collier: That appointment was his commission for the sale of the smelter.

Mr. TAYLOR: The hon. member might be in possession of knowledge to justify that statement which he (Mr. Taylor) did not possess. The first appointment was not creditable either to the Minister or to the gentleman who accepted it. Articles were published in the Press about it from the start, and it was always said Mr. Dunstan was only in the first position awaiting a chance to be put in his present one.

The Minister for Mines: He was over the other man from the first day he went there.

Mr. TAYLOR: And now he had taken his position.

The Minister for Mines: He took the position from the start.

Mr. TAYLOR: Then that was another example of bad administration. If the Superintendent of Batteries was incapable, and another man had to be put over his head to supervise his work, evidently money was being wasted. Why did

not the Government dispense with the services of the superintendent at once, and put another man in his position. Supposing this engineer and metallurgist had failed, probably another man would have been put over him with a higher title and salary, and so it would have gone on. If such had been done the State of our finances would be worse than they were now. If the Committee were in full possession of the facts concerning Mr. Dunstan's first appointment, they would strike out the salary of that officer altogether instead of merely reducing the vote by £1. He did not intend to question the appointment made by the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. Troy: How could my reference be taken as an insult to the Minister if the appointment were made by the Public Service Commissioner?

Mr. TAYLOR: The appointment was made by the Public Service Commissioner. Who drew up the agreement?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The agreement was drawn up by the Commissioner who agreed to the appointment.

Mr. Taylor: Did the Public Service Commissioner recommend the appointment?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: When the applications for the position came in the department recommended that Mr. Dunstan should be appointed. The Public Service Commissioner acquiesced in this decision, and drafted the agreement. He fixed up all the arrangements except the one with regard to three months' leave of absence. Mr. Dunstan and he (the Minister) insisted on going into the agreement.

Mr. TAYLOR: Was one to understand that the department recommended the appointment, and that the pressure of the department was brought to bear on the Commissioner until he acquiesced?

The Treasurer: No; we always recommend.

Mr. Scaddan: Did the Public Service Commissioner recommend anyone to the department?

THE CHAIRMAN: Order.

Mr. TAYLOR thanked the Treasurer for the information that the head of the department always made the recom-

mendation to the Public Service Commissioner. Then, he presumed, the Commissioner made a further recommendation to the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: He usually recommends to the Governor-in-Council. In this case Mr. Dunstan is not under the Public Service Act.

Mr. TAYLOR: Then the Commissioner had no control over him.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be better for the Minister to make a reply afterwards.

Mr. TAYLOR: If Mr. Dunstan was not a civil servant, he was not under the control of the Public Service Commissioner.

The Minister for Mines: He is in a sense.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Minister had conveyed the information that this special agreement had been drawn up between himself, the Commissioner, and Mr. Dunstan, and Mr. Dunstan was not a civil servant, and if he was not a civil servant within the meaning of the Act, he was not under the control of the Commissioner. Were we passing this item for a civil servant or for someone specially appointed by the Minister? That information he would have if we had to sit here until daylight.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: All the public servants were under the control of the Commissioner. With regard to this appointment we followed exactly the same procedure as we did in connection with Professor Lowrie's appointment, with the exception of course, that the term is a shorter one. The procedure adopted here was similar to that followed in connection with other appointments under Section 36 of the Public Service Act. Applications were called and the head of the Mines Department made a recommendation to the Public Service Commissioner. He acquiesced in that recommendation, but owing to the appointment having been made under Section 36 it did not necessitate the Commissioner making a recommendation to the Governor-in-Council which he would have had to do if the appointment had been a permanent one under the Act. An agreement was prepared and

entered into, and to all intents and purposes this officer could not claim anything for length of service.

Mr. Taylor: He is not a civil servant in the ordinary sense.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, and as had been already pointed out, he could be retired on three months' notice being given, or he could leave the service on giving similar notice to the Government. He wished to impress hon. members with this fact: there was a superintendent of State batteries, and for reasons well-known to members, we appointed someone above that superintendent, and gave him the title of engineer and metallurgist. The gentleman who was superintendent left the department and when the agreement was prepared after Mr. Dunstan's appointment, it was thought better to adhere to the title "superintendent" rather than "engineer and metallurgist." There was nothing to hide about the appointment. As to the qualifications which Mr. Dunstan held, there was no need to repeat them. A great saving had been made in the department; a great saving to the customers of the department, and with those facts before hon. members he could not understand the reason for the opposition unless it was for party purposes.

Mr. Taylor: No, it is not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES was aware that the hon. member did not play that game. He relied upon the hon. member to stand by him in connection with this appointment. He had been able to show that reductions of £8,000 had been made in crushing, £12,000 more to people who purchased the sands, and there had been a reduction of £7,000 in working expenses. Surely when that had been done in the space of one year, members would admit that the appointment was amply justified. There was no doubt about Mr. Dunstan's qualifications. He was first chosen by the Government of the party to which the hon. member belonged, and every member of that Government had confidence in him when they appointed him. He believed Mr. Dunstan to be straightforward and an officer who thoroughly understood his

duties. He was a metallurgist equal to most metallurgists in the State, and beyond that he was a keen business man. Some thought we should have an engineer in the position of superintendent. He (the Minister) claimed we wanted a metallurgist first, and a business man afterwards.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Minister had pointed out that this special appointment was not under the control of the Public Service Commissioner, but the Commissioner when classifying the service, classified the Superintendent of State Batteries at £600. When the Commissioner thought it was his duty to classify that position, he must have thought that the occupant of the office would come under his control, otherwise why did he classify him? Now we found the man who filled the position was not under the control of the Commissioner. The more one probed the question the worse it looked. He was not debating the question for any party purposes, nor was he going to screen the department, because it had been shown that a saving had been effected. It did not matter how much was saved or spent; the question was, whether the appointment was made in a manner which was fair and square and above board. Were there any other applicants for the position?

The Minister for Mines: Yes, about twenty.

Mr. TAYLOR: And did the Public Service Commissioner recommend anyone?

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. TAYLOR: Mr. Dunstan was recommended by the head of the department, and the Commissioner acquiesced. Did the Minister think he had the best man of the twenty applicants?

The Minister for Mines: There was one other I had a good opinion of.

Mr. TAYLOR: We should have some knowledge about these applicants, and the manner in which they were dealt with. He believed that by the manner in which these appointments were now made the Public Service Commissioner was rendered absolutely powerless. The Government suggested to him to recommend a certain man, and then the Government

promptly made the appointment. He would enter his protest against the manner in which the appointment was made by supporting the amendment.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	17
Noes	..	..	..	20

Majority against 3

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Bath	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Collier	Mr. Swan
Mr. Gill	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Holman	Mr. Walker
Mr. Horan	Mr. Ware
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnson	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Keenan
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Layman
Mr. Carson	Mr. Male
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Mougier
Mr. Davies	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Draper	Mr. Osborn
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Price
Mr. Gregory	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Hayward	(Teller).
Mr. Jacoby	

Amendment thus negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Department of Railways (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Vote—*Railways*, £992,583:

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In dealing with the Estimates for the Railway Department, before I point out the reductions made in regard to the working of this department, I think it would not be out of place to refer to the growth of our railway system in Western Australia, and to show how this large asset—the most valuable asset we have in connection with our public debt—has grown during the past ten years. In 1900-1 our mileage was 1,355 miles and our capital expenditure £7,098,239. To-day our estimated mileage is over 2,000 miles and our estimated capital expenditure £11,000,000. With so large an amount of capital invested it should be of interest to hon. members to have some comparisons made in regard to the earnings

and working expenses of the system. In 1901-2 the earnings amounted to £1,521,429 and the working expenses to £1,256,370. Last year—that is, the financial year 1907-8—the earnings amounted to £1,501,925. On the other hand our working expenses were £1,007,732, or nearly £250,000 less than in the year 1901-2. The surplus earnings after paying working expenses in 1901-2 amounted to £265,059, whereas last year our surplus after paying working expenses, amounted to £494,193. The profit in 1901-2 after paying interest and working expenses was £12,168, whereas last year it amounted to £128,009. This year we estimate that after paying working expenses and interest on total capital expended we will be able to show a profit of £148,322. The working expenses per cent. of earnings of the railway system in 1901-2 were—

Mr. Holman: Are you reckoning the £30,000 for replacing obsolete stock?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will explain that when I come to it.

Mr. Holman: Because on those lines it is very easy to show a profit.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The figures I have just given are those of last year. If the hon. member desires it I will give the figures for 1904-5. The profit after paying working expenses and interest in 1904-5 amounted to £22,744 as against £128,009 for 1907-8. Yet the revenue was over £100,000 less last year than in 1904-5. Our working expenses per cent. of earnings shows that in 1901-2 the cost to the department was 82.58; in 1902-3, 80.33; in 1904-5, 78.01; and for last year 67.10. The percentage of working expenses last year was the lowest since 1897. A perusal of the railway report will show the great economies which have been effected during the past 12 months. During the past three years the Railway Department has consistently shown economies in connection with the administration, but more especially are these shown in last year's returns in comparison with those of any previous year. I would like to point out that our railways system from its inception to the present day, after paying all working expenses and

interest on all moneys expended, shows a profit of £719,092. I do not think that any other State in Australia can show the same record.

Mr. Gill: Is that after paying sinking fund?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, not sinking fund, but interest and working expenses. Included in our working expenses we have paid £234,180 for replacement of obsolete rolling stock. It is a very large item and one which we have expended out of revenue in connection with our railway system. Up to this year, each year since 1901-2 we have set aside a sum of money for the replacement of obsolete rolling stock. In 1902 the amount was £22,900, and that has steadily grown until it reached £40,358 in 1906-7, this sum being reduced to £30,000 for last year. No amount has been placed upon the Estimates this year for this item. Although I would very much like to see this item still upon our Estimates, we must remember that in connection with all moneys which have been borrowed for the purpose of building up our railway system we have had to provide a sinking fund. In many instances a large sinking fund is provided, and as we make that provision and set aside each year a certain sum for the purpose of providing a sinking fund on all money invested, I think we can safely claim that we are justified in omitting this item from our Estimates. Still I confess I would much sooner have seen the item there. But with a diminishing revenue and an increasing sinking fund each year we felt that we would be quite justified in omitting that £30,000 from the Railway Estimates, feeling that that money was more than replaced by the amount being paid each year in sinking fund. The capital value of our rolling stock on the 30th June of last year was £2,661,106, but the actual valuation of that rolling stock was no less than £2,815,179, or a difference of £154,073. That is to say, our rolling stock had actually increased in its value owing to the money spent from revenue in building it up. Now just a short comparison in connection with the working of our railway system during the term I have been in office. In 1904-5 the

cost per cent. of earnings was 78 per cent.; in 1905-6, 74 per cent.; in 1906-7 again 74 per cent.; in 1907-8, 67 per cent., while this year it is estimated that it will be 65 per cent. As hon. members will see, it will appear less on account of several items having been taken off our Estimates. The cost of train miles run was in 1904-5, 5s. 10d.; in 1905-6, 5s. 6d.; in 1906-7, 5s. 5d.; last year, 5s. 1d.; while this year it is estimated to be 4s. 10d.

Mr. Brown: How does that compare with the Eastern States?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not followed it this year with a view to making a comparison. Last year we compared our figures with those of Queensland, but in point of facilities given to the travelling public here in comparison with those in Queensland; and comparing the hours worked here and the rate of wages paid and the great difficulties experienced in connection with our coal and water supplies, it is impossible to take a fair average for the purposes of comparison with any other country. Queensland is the one place with which we could compare but for those difficulties. The rates of pay there are considerably less there than they are here, while the hours worked are much longer. Again, they have not the same difficulties in connection with their water and coal supplies. In fact all their supplies are considerably cheaper than ours. And although we made comparisons last year. Mr. Thallon in his report pointed out how absurd it was to attempt such comparisons in connection with our railway system. Taking the past four years the cost of earnings last year was 67 per cent. as against 74 per cent. for 1905-6, while the cost per train mile run was 5s. 1d. as against 5s. 6d., and the cost per mile open was £748 in 1905-6 as against £678 in 1906-7 and for last year £551. So that it will be seen in the different classifications we are able to show a considerable decrease in the cost of administration. It must also be remembered that we have been taking on a large number of new spur lines that are being built out into districts poorly populated. It was well known when these railways

were being constructed that for some years at least they would show a loss upon their earnings. Last year we took over the Jandakot-Arncliffe Railway, the Collie-Narrogin Railway, the Wonerup-Jarrahood Railway, the Donnybrook-Preston Railway, first section, the Greenhills-Quairading Railway, and the Coolgardie-Widgemooltha Railway. It was well known these lines would not be worked at a profit, but in face of this we have been able to show a substantial decrease in the cost of administration. Next year we will have to take over the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Railway, the Donnybrook-Preston Railway, second section, the Jarrahood-Nannup Railway, and the Narrogin-Wickepin Railway; and I think for a little time at least we must expect, with the exception of the Hopetoun line, which I hope from the start will be a paying concern, that in the early stages of their working they will show slight loss. But in spite of this I think we will be able to show a considerable reduction in cost of administration. When we first took over these spur lines there were heavy charges for transit over them. There were what were termed special spur-line charges. Now I have reduced all these special charges, and the only extra impost we make on these spur lines is a terminal charge of 1s. per ton. All goods carried over them have to pay, in addition to the mileage on the spur lines, a special impost of 1s. per ton. Now that is a considerable reduction on the charges that were first fixed for the carriage of goods upon these railways.

Mr. Scaddan: Do you take some credit to yourself for doing that?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I only want to point out—

Mr. Scaddan: Oh, you do not want to point out the fact that you made the original charges.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member can point it out if he thinks he is correct; if it is not correct it does not matter; but those charges were made by the Commissioner. At any rate, we abolished them, and it does not matter who made the imposts; they were certainly very heavy at the start, and now

the only special impost on these spur lines is the 1s. per ton. Our revenue for last year has kept up about the same as in the previous year, and we have no misgivings. Anyone reading the railway report would naturally assume that on account of the lesser tonnage carried last year there had been a considerable reduction in the ordinary business of the State. However, that was not the case. The reductions that took place were in regard to the carriage of stone for road-making purposes, and mineral ore in transit from the fields to the coast. On the other hand we showed an increase in the wool, hay, straw, chaff and grain carried over the lines. As far as our agriculturists were concerned, our railway statistics showed a very fair increase in the freight on agricultural products, and the chief reduction in railway freights was brought about by a smaller quantity of mineral ore being carried upon the railways than there was in the preceding years. A great many improvements had been made during the past year on the railway system. There has been a considerable amount of fencing in agricultural districts, and on the spur lines we have been putting sheds, ramps, and cattle races at the different sidings. This has been found necessary. We wanted to build those lines as cheaply and economically as possible, but when farmers brought their produce to the sidings and left it there in order to return to bring in more produce, stray cattle got to it, with the result that the farmers suffered loss. We intend in the future to fence these sidings and erect sheds and ramps for the farmers' convenience. Considerable alteration has been made at Bunbury in connection with the bunkering of coal. We are desirous of giving all the facilities we can to build up the bunkering trade; and if the trade can be found to be permanent, which I believe it is going to be, we will try to give much better facilities than those now in course of construction. Some time ago a question was raised in regard to the duplication of our railways. We have duplicated the Eastern Railway as far as Spencer's Brook, and there have been suggestions that the duplication should be extended.

but I think we have done all that is necessary to that line at the present time; and if there is to be any further duplication of that sort it will only be done by a special vote through Parliament, and not through the ordinary system of spending money voted by Parliament for improvements to our railways generally. It has been acknowledged for some time that the Northampton Railway should be improved. There had been a wonderful increase in business, and about 12 miles of line have been relaid and regraded. As soon as the Loan Estimates have been passed, and we have the necessary authority for further improvements to that line, it is our intention to relay and regrade it all the way to Northampton. I do not think I need bother any further in regard to these matters, except to deal with one question that has been before the public mind lately, and that is in connection with the staff upon our railways generally. While Mr. George was Commissioner, and since then, there has always been a desire to give all the facilities which could reasonably be expected from the Railway Department for the betterment of the condition of our railway men. We have a railway institute in Perth, and others in Kalgoorlie and Bunbury. We have a provident fund initiated by the men themselves, and a death fund. Technical education for apprentices has been attended to in the Midland workshops; and in every way we are doing all I think can reasonably be expected of us for the betterment of the men and the staff generally. But I regret very much indeed that in connection with our salaried staff we were unable last year to give any increases of pay. Considerable reductions were made in the staff, over 114 of the clerical staff being retrenched, and the work of those who were retrenched naturally fell on others, and because of this increased work being given to the remaining officers I felt that, owing to the great economy effected during the year, by which we were able to show such a wonderful reduction in working expenses, I would have been glad to give some increases of pay, more especially among the lower paid men. However, we were unfortunately unable to do

it, but, as members know, we have recently been able to conclude an agreement with the wages men for a period of three years, and I hope that the agreement that has been arrived at will prove satisfactory to the men and to the State generally. It has been argued that, in connection with the employment of adult labour, there should be a minimum rate of pay of 8s. a day, but I want to impress upon hon. members that when we give the coaching porters a minimum rate of 7s. 6d. per day, it is plus privileges, and these privileges have been held by the Arbitration Court to be worth 6d. per day to each of our railway men.

Mr. Angwin: A lot of them would rather have the sixpence.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:

It has been held that in some instances it amounts to more than 6d. per day. With their uniforms and other things it is estimated it is worth 7½d. per day to coaching porters, but I am taking it at 6d. per day. Therefore, 7s. 6d. per day with privileges equal to 6d. per day is equal to a salary of 8s. per day. However I feel satisfied that the vast majority of the men are perfectly content with the arrangement that has been made. I only wish to point out that the minimum rate for porters, fixed by the arbitration award, was 6s. 6d. per day. When this agreement was discussed there were in the service 16 porters getting 6s. 6d. per day, 168 getting 7s. per day, and all the rest getting 7s. 6d. per day and upwards. The Government felt that 6s. 6d. per day was not a fair rate of pay for any adult in the service. The Commissioner thought the minimum rate should be 7s. a day, but I want to impress on hon. members that in fixing a minimum, it was not, as a rule, the rate of wage paid in the railway system. Although the minimum for repairers was 7s. a day there was only one of them employed getting less than 8s. a day. But we were desirous that the minimum rate should continue, because there may often be reasons why a man in the initial stage of his work should get only the lower rate until the department are satisfied that he is fit for his duties. Yet the returns show that so far as the department were concerned,

they were desirous of paying these men an equitable sum for the work on which they were employed.

Mr. Angwin: They were afraid to offer any less.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We had one repairer at 7s. a day, 616 at 8s. a day, 40 at 9s. a day, two at 9s. 6d. a day, and four at 10s. a day. Also, in connection with the labourers, the agreement fixed the minimum rate at 7s. 6d. a day for the first three months, and the standard rate at 8s.; but at the beginning of the year there was only one man working at 7s. a day, and there were two at 7s. 6d. whereas there were 252 at 8s., 31 at 9s. 6d., 16 at 9s., and three at 10s. Of course, those at 8s. 6d. to 10s. should be termed skilled labourers, but members will see that the great majority of the ordinary labourers were being employed at 1s. a day above the minimum.

Mr. Johnson: That does not assist the man working at 7s.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; but there may often be a few men who could well be employed at 7s., and the hon. member, in the motion he brought before the House put a special addition to it, that nothing in the motion should prevent the Commissioner employing men at a lesser rate, under certain conditions, as provided under the Arbitration Act.

Mr. Johnson: Those are not the conditions you recognise.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I recognise the conditions here; but, whereas we had the power, under the award, to pay 7s. 6d., we never used it. Out of 650 men there was only one getting 7s.; the others got 8s.

Mr. Swan: You do not think that the Arbitration Court anticipated that you would make any reduction.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; and that is why I object to it. The Arbitration Court fixed the minimum at 7s. a day, but we would not allow it; we would not agree to it. The only case in which the minimum was paid was during the probationary period for the first three months, but after that a man was to be paid the 8s. If he is not worth the 8s. he must go out. These are the con-

ditions applying to-day as approved of by the executive of the men. For the first three months there is a minimum of 7s. 6d., and after that a man's wages are to be raised to 8s., or he is passed out of the service. If he is a competent and good workman he will get the 8s., and, I take it, that is as it should be. Then, in connection with the time of employment during which the wages shall be counted, the workmen asked for a period of 48 hours each week to stand alone. In South Australia the period is 96 hours, and in Victoria a month. That is, in connection with the latter case, if at any time during the month overtime is worked, it shall be adjusted; if not adjusted that month it shall be in the following month. In New South Wales the period is 96 hours, and that stands alone, and the same applies in Queensland. We have gone a little better than applies in any system in the States so far as the periods are concerned. Here we make it 96 hours; but if a man works more than 8 hours a day in one week, say 12 hours, he will be paid overtime for four hours. All over eight hours can be adjusted the following week; if it cannot be, he will receive overtime in connection with that eight hours. Sunday time has to stand alone at time and a-half. We have fixed up an industrial agreement with the engine-drivers for 12 months, with the various tradesmen for three years, and with the permanent way men, etc., for three years; so that I think we may well look forward to industrial peace on the system for many years to come. One other question is in regard to sectional returns. The Leader of the Opposition, by notice of motion, has urged, in connection with the system, that we should give to hon. members and the public generally sectional returns, showing the earnings, the expenditure and profits in connection with each portion of the system. As has been pointed out, this is general in New South Wales and Queensland. In the latter State it is easy to give sectional returns, for each system there stands almost entirely on its own. Returns can be easily got out. In New South Wales, it is stated, the returns are hardly worth the

paper they are written on. So far as I can judge from the papers and returns I have received from the Railway Department it is absolutely impossible for us to provide sectional returns which would be of any value. They can only be made by guesswork where the systems overlap, and it is impossible to give the public in any report a clear exposition of the working expenses and earnings of any one system unless it is kept entirely apart. We will be able to give a special return as to the earnings of the Ravens-thorpe system. In other cases it is impossible to supply sectional returns. In conclusion, while regretting that our revenue is not increasing, still, at the same time, it is keeping up to what it was last year, and the expenditure has shown a vast reduction. I hope we shall be able to make great reductions in the future. We are getting more work from all the staff than we were doing before, or, at any rate, we are able to do much more work with fewer workmen. The system has, I think, shown itself to be able to make a considerable profit, which goes to the State, and more especially does this apply to last year's operations, and, I am very hopeful that if we get a few good years of agriculture the system will be able to show far greater profits still, and that we shall be able to make rebates to the producers of the country, and give them the advantages being effected in connection with the reduction in the cost of the railway system.

Mr. BOLTON: The custom in the past had been for the Railway Estimates to fall pretty flat in the Committee. He had often wondered why it was that more interest was not shown in a State Department responsible for more than one-half of the estimated revenue for the ensuing year, and for nearly one-half of the estimated expenditure, and a department responsible for more than one-half of the total indebtedness of the State. With all due deference to the Minister he might say he had often thought that that gentleman was of opinion that if he made the railway figures as dry as he could, went back, as he usually did, for five or six years, tracing the growth of the railway system, the number of miles built

and opened for traffic during a certain number of years, the amount of revenue and so on, he would cause less interest to be taken in the department. Anyhow, he could well understand why, such being the case, there was not a better attendance of members when these Estimates were under consideration. It would have been more interesting this year had the consideration of the vote been delayed for about a week, for he was justified in saying that if the information now was hardly what could be termed up-to-date, it would have been at least quite up-to-date had we the assistance and services of the ex-Commissioner of Railways as a member of this House. He could promise members that the Railway Estimates would have been more interesting than they had been for a good many years past if Mr. George were taking part in the debate. A few remarks the Minister had made he had taken note of, and there was one to which he would refer. He did not propose to discuss in the least the agreement just entered into, for if the men were satisfied he would not be the first to raise his voice against the agreement. It was time for him to hold his tongue if the men were satisfied. The executive of the men having accepted the agreement, it was no part of his business to interfere between them and the department. The Minister said there was only one man on the permanent way at the beginning of this year who was in receipt of wages of less than 8s. per day. He was prepared to believe that was correct, but members might be enlightened concerning the matter if he were to ask the Minister how long the men had been in receipt of the 8s., and was it not only from just prior to the closing of the agreement, which expired on the last day of last year? Another very strong point was this. It had been the practice, not only in the permanent way, but also in a good many of the branches, to retrench men after a certain period and then re-employ them, but to make them undergo another probationary period. It had always been his idea that the probationary period was established in order to prove the efficiency of the men.

The Minister for Railways: So it is.

Mr. BOLTON: That was not so in various branches of the department, where men had been retrenched after they had given good service and had undertaken certain work for a number of years, but who, owing to the slackness in the trade, had been retrenched. On being re-employed those skilled men, who knew their work thoroughly, were not paid the maximum, or even the sum they received when retrenched, but had to go back at the probationary rate. This was the case, although they had already proved their qualifications.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner of Railways says that it is not so.

Mr. BOLTON was quite willing that the Minister should accept the Commissioner's word, but he refused to do so, believing that the Commissioner was not made conversant with the facts. It might be, and probably was, that the Commissioner was not conversant with them, for he would do that gentleman the justice of saying that if he knew such were the case he would alter it. The *Ss.* minimum for the permanent way was a distinct advantage, for the department could not now retrench and re-employ these men, and force them to undergo more than one probationary period. The Minister had been very optimistic, although he admitted that trade was considerably less, and that less tonnage was hauled and less passenger bookings taken this year than had been the case for a considerable number of years. Still, the Minister had pointed out that as the cost of operations had been reduced so materially, he was hopeful that, in view of the amount that had already been paid into the Treasury, some £719,000, there would be a greater sum received in the ensuing year. His (Mr. Bolton's) opinion was that the railways, in addition to being made to pay for themselves, being a State department responsible for so much loan money, should at least make more than their expenses. There should be an annual profit from the railways. It had been argued that all profits from the State railways should be handed back either directly or indirectly, to the consumer and the producer, and the ledger

should always be made to balance. The railways provided the best asset of the State. More money had been spent on them than on any other department, and they received the least attention of any State Department in this House. The department could show a profit, and it should be shown clearly and definitely to the members of this Committee how the profit was made. There had been dubious methods adopted, and there always would be, in making such profits. He did not desire to bring before the Committee pin-pricks, and matters that were really only parochial; but if members were conversant with the economies of the last 12 months under the present Commissioner they would be intensely surprised and disgusted. There were such small matters as altering and attending to the sanitary accommodation of the waiting-rooms, and cases where small profits were shown, which were really so petty that they ought never to have been effected. If the railways were running at a loss these little economies, which were not worth much, might be brought into operation; but where the railways were showing a profit where the Commissioner showed that working expenses and interest had been paid, to make such petty economies was not worthy of consideration. The Commissioner had reported that the total new mileage opened for the year was 179. The capital cost of this new mileage was £432,000, or an average of £2,413 per mile. It was as well to consider these figures, considering we had had put before the Committee so frequently the great advantage derived to the State by the construction of these agricultural spur railways at a cost of not more than £1,000 a mile. And when they had taken over these thousand pound per mile railways and added them to the general system, it was found that to put them into proper running order there was a considerable additional expenditure necessary. Most of these railways referred to, were agricultural railways, with the exception of two, the Coolgardie-Norseman, and the other one members knew well. Concerning the earnings, the Minister took an optimistic view. It was not difficult for members to turn to the railway report,

on one page of which they would find nearly all the information which had been given by the Minister. If members worked out the lines they desired to get information upon, they would not only get the figures for last year, but the figures for the past ten years. The earnings last year were £35,408 less than in any period during the previous five years. From that bald statement, the position did not look too rosy. But if the particular line was dropped, the percentage of working costs per mile and the earnings per mile would look more rosy. The working expenses last year were less by £128,000. The average number of miles worked was more, and the cost per average mile was less; the surplus over the working expenses was more, and the percentage of working expenses to the earnings was less, while the percentage of profit was more. The working expenses per average mile were less, and the earnings per train mile more. If the lines were taken exactly as they were mentioned in the Commissioner's report, it would be found on the bare statements of the Commissioner that they were very unsatisfactory indeed. He felt that he must refer to the economies again, economies for which there were a good many reasons. Whilst it might be thought they were matters which did not altogether affect the Railway Estimates, they were matters which, in his opinion, the Committee should deal with. Members of the Committee had reported that the time would come when there would be a reaction in consequence of the necessity for repairs to rolling stock which had always been in use. Instead of these repairs having been effected, new rolling stock was brought into use, and this also was taxed to its utmost without the necessary repairs being done. He was not one who liked to cry stinking fish, but the running arrangements in the last few months had not been as satisfactory as they had been before. Members would have noticed, especially lately, that there had been a considerable amount of late running of trains, and all the public got, was a little paragraph in a paper that a certain train was late and so on and so forth. But there was an expression of

wonder from those interested as to why they had to wait so long in the case of one recent mishap for a relief engine to come along. The fact remained that the engines running to-day were taxed more than they should be, and that the engines which had been in service three or four or even five years, were nearly all new rolling stock. The old stock had been thrown out of use, and no money had been spent on them for necessary repairs, except perhaps on a few of the obsolete type. The new stock had become run down to such an extent that it was not possible to use it to cope with the traffic to-day, and, in addition to that, during the past four or five years, the running of those engines had been gradually increased to such an extent, that the least accident to the engine meant an absolute failure. The time was drawing near when there would be a heavy expenditure, and then members would be asked to vote a huge sum of money to replace the obsolete rolling stock, which, if kept up to the mark would not have become obsolete. This stock was running day after day, and year after year for the sole purpose of showing that the railways were making a substantial profit.

The Minister for Railways: Yet Mr. Hume says the stock is better now than ever.

Mr. BOLTON: And it paid Mr. Hume to say so. Mr. Hume had to show some saving to justify his appointment. Would it be right for the Chief Mechanical Engineer to say that he had not been able for want of money to make necessary repairs? It was necessary for the heads of branches to send reports to the Commissioner for submission to the House.

The Minister for Railways: Do you think Mr. Hume would sacrifice his reputation?

Mr. BOLTON: In his opinion Mr. Hume was a man who would not sacrifice his reputation. He would have his reputation first, and his job next, but if members referred to Mr. Hume's reports year after year, they would find exactly the same statement with regard to rolling stock, that it was in a better condition than ever. That was all right, and next

year he would go on saying the same thing. At Midland Junction they had a yard full of locomotives which were supposed to be obsolete. These locomotives had hauled more trucks than they should have done. They had to earn their money, and to do that, they used to overload those engines. The engines which we imported, were the most expensive narrow gauge engines, and they did good work while they were properly treated, but they were worked to a standstill and were not kept in a proper state of repair. To-day the department was reaping the results of that method of running those engines. The veriest layman would even understand that an engine if kept in first-class order would do much better work than one which did not receive attention. The manner in which the engines had been neglected, accounted to a great extent for the breakdowns and delays of the past few weeks, and the time was coming when there would be many more, and it would not be prevented until the House voted more money for the purchase of new locomotives. Instead of keeping these locomotives which had done good service, in good repair, they were put on one side and new rolling stock was used. There was another matter to which he desired to refer, and which he hoped the Minister would take notice of. The Minister stated it was intended to do some fencing around the platforms or sidings of the agricultural railways. There was a work which was more necessary than that; he referred to fencing in the railway lines which ran through agricultural districts. The Government were going on with the land development policy and all the time the land was gradually becoming more heavily stocked, and there was no fencing at all. It was lucky indeed that the Government had not experienced some severe smashes from straying cattle. If ever there was a work needed in various parts of the State, places known to the Minister, or at least known to the Commissioner, it was the work of erecting fences in agricultural districts. The Commissioner stated that it was his intention to discontinue publishing branch reports and that all he would do would be to ask for a certificate from the

head of the branch, which would be embodied in the annual report submitted to Parliament. Members would not know what was being done in the different branches of the department. He hoped the Minister would voice the opinion that he was opposed to that proposal of the Commissioner. No exception and no criticism had ever taken place in connection with these branch reports, but it was necessary that they should be published for the benefit of those who cared to study them as well as the report of the Commissioner. It would be better too for the heads of the branches to know that their reports were embodied in toto in the Commissioner's report, instead of merely having their certificates published as to the general working and the state of repair of their different sections. The inclusion of these reports in the annual report of the Commissioner would not add very much to the expense, because it only meant the printing of an extra page or two. There was another matter to which he desired to refer. It was brought under his notice within the last day or two, and he decided only to-day to mention it to the Committee. It was an individual case, but it was worthy of some attention. A serious breach of the rules and regulations was committed on one of the northern railways. The station-master was taken to task, and it was found that he was guiltless, and that the superintendent who was in charge of that part of the railways was the man to blame. He (Mr. Bolton) was given to understand that the official was fined heavily for that breach, and following out the usual red tape methods of the Railway Department, they asked the station-master to sign what was known as a caution. A caution or a warning was recorded against the character of an officer and when he resigned or his services were dispensed with, this was used against him. In the present case the station-master who had some considerable service and was looked upon as a capable officer was found blameless and he refused to sign the caution. They tried to persuade him to sign it, but rather than do so he resigned his position. He came to Perth to see about some holidays which were due to

him, for length of service. On that officer visiting the Perth office he was reminded that he had not given the usual notice and was asked if he proposed leaving the State; in which event, he was told, they would pay him right up and allow him to get away. On the other hand if he were not leaving the State he would have to work out his notice. On his explaining that he was not about to leave the State they told him he would have to work out his notice; and he was actually sent to a station up the line for that purpose. It was a most foolhardy thing for the department to do. A man who had sent in his resignation and who wished to leave the service had been compelled to work out his full notice. He (Mr. Bolton) believed that if matters such as this were to be brought under the notice of the supreme head of the department some remedy might be found; but there were altogether too many finicking officers, and in consequence these matters did not get very far up through the service, but were dealt with without their coming under the notice of the Commissioner. The railway service was undoubtedly the best asset the State had, and in his belief it was the best railway system in the Commonwealth. He was glad to echo the optimism of the Minister. In his opinion if trade were to be looked for by the department a good deal more business would be found, and the department would take a considerable share of the traffic now being carried by water. He was convinced that the prosperity of the department would continue. The department was happy in a faithful staff, and notwithstanding that the State had been under a depression, that depression had not to any serious extent affected the railways.

Mr. DRAPER: Some information was required from the Minister for Railways with reference to the Collie coal contract. Up to September of last year the Collie Proprietary had enjoyed 45 per cent. of the Government contracts, the balance being distributed over the Scottish Collieries, the Collie Co-Operative and the Collie-Cardiff mines. It had been anticipated that with the expiration of these contracts an equal division would be made amongst

the four companies. He desired to know why the same system which had existed up to September last year was still in force, and why even to-day the Collie Proprietary was enjoying a much larger proportion of the contracts for the coal supplies of the Government than fell to any of the other three collieries. So far as he could learn from a perusal of the reports of various interviews with the Minister it had never been stated that the quality of the coal from the Collie Proprietary mine was better than any other coal. That might be the reason for the unequal distribution of the contracts; but it had not been given out as the reason. It was a fact also that the price paid by the Government to these collieries for the coal was above the actual market value of that coal. That extra price it seemed was given in order to encourage local industry. Probably no member of the Committee would object to the Government encouraging local industry, especially when it was remembered that under the Commonwealth Constitution Act the Government could not encourage industries by the means of a direct bonus. If it were correct that the price paid for the coal was above the market value with a view to encouraging the industry then, other things being equal, it would be only reasonable to expect that the contract should be equally divided between the four companies. It might be said in extenuation that the calorific value of the Collie Proprietary coal exceeded that of other companies. But if that were the explanation to be offered to the Committee he would remind the Minister that it would contradict the report made by the Royal Commission on Collie Coal, laid before the House some three years ago. If hon. members would look at page 119 of that report they would find that it contained a schedule from the report made upon the subject by Mr. Julius, and contained also a summary of the tests of the calorific values. It would be found that there were two collieries whose coal, in calorific value, exceeded that of the Collie Proprietary. Moreover, it would appear that the calorific value of the Collie Proprietary coal had been greater prior to March, 1903,

than it was at the date of the report, which was somewhere in 1905. That report was the only authority before the Committee and it would lead one to suppose that the calorific value of the Collie Proprietary coal was in worse position to-day than in 1905. At any rate in 1905 there had been no evidence to show that it was better or even equal to that of some of the other coals. Moreover, it was surely an important matter in an agricultural community to consider which of the coals were the more likely to emit sparks along the agricultural railways and destroy the crops of the settlers. On page 75 of the report, from which he had already quoted, there was a comparison made between the coal from Newcastle, from Collie Burn, from the Co-operative, the Cardiff and from the Proprietary. And the ratio in which the sparking qualities of the respective coals were shown was as follows:—Newcastle was marked 1, Collie Burn 1.5, Co-operative and Cardiff 4.5, and Proprietary 10. So it seemed that the Proprietary was absolutely the worst coal of the lot for causing fires in agricultural districts. He submitted that in face of these records the Committee required some explanation as to why these contracts had not been equally distributed. One reason which had been advanced was that the Collie Proprietary had done good service to the State in introducing a bunkering trade. The rivals of the Collie Proprietary denied this, but according to the reports in the newspaper it was a reason officially given. Surely it was a very poor one. Because on page 29 of the railways report, speaking of native coals the chief storekeeper in his report stated—

“The contract for native coal expires on the 30th September next. Some trouble is experienced in obtaining regular supplies of this fuel when the mines are fulfilling shipping orders.”

There it would be seen that the very reason advanced for granting a larger share of the contract to the Collie Proprietary was in the eyes of the department a distinct disadvantage. He submitted that the Committee were entitled to satisfactory information as to why these contracts were not equally divided.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was a great pity that the Minister when placing the Estimates before the Committee had not taken hon. members further into his confidence and explained how in past years many thousands of pounds had been spent from revenue upon works now carried out with loan moneys in order to bolster up the revenue and show a good return at the end of the year. In comparing the profits of last year with those of 1904-5 the Minister had stated that last year the profits were £128,009, while in 1904-5 they had been £22,744. Certainly the Minister had mentioned that £79,000 was spent in the earlier year which should have been distributed over a number of years. However there were some other large items which in 1904-5 it was the custom to spend from revenue, such as £25,000 for new works and improvements. No such items were to be found in the Estimates of to-day. And again, in 1904-5 there had been an item from revenue of £13,000 for vacuum brakes, together with over £40,000 for replacing obsolete stock.

The Treasurer: You had a quarter of a million more revenue.

Mr. HOLMAN: And out of that the Labour Government had spent, on bringing the railways up to date, a further sum of £168,000 in wages, together with £37,000 in material.

The Treasurer: Had you not had the quarter of a million, what would you have done?

Mr. HOLMAN: The Government of that day might or might not have robbed the Loan Fund as the present Government were doing. It would be well for the Committee to realise the facts, and have them placed in a proper manner. We heard a great deal about the £148,000 profit we were to have this year, but we noticed on these Revenue Estimates that the last remaining link that could be cut down and placed on the Loan Estimates was being so treated. That was the item for replacing obsolete rolling stock and locomotives. This expenditure had always appeared on the Revenue Estimates, and two years ago amounted to £40,331. It had always been an increasing item, but last year it was reduced to £30,000; and

now it was wiped out altogether to bolster up the Minister and to try to show a profit on the working of the railways. It was not fair finance. To put the whole of the expenditure on loan funds and so bolster up the revenue in order to show what great financiers our Ministers were, was unfair. The Minister should be fair and should explain exactly how it was these large profits were being made. Frequently it had been said that a great many works previously carried out from revenue had been transferred to loan expenditure; and now it was proved that even this last remaining link was being transferred. It was neither fair to the country nor to those people who previously carried on the administration. Had the money spent in 1904-5 out of revenue on works on which expenditure from revenue need not have been incurred, the profits showing for that year would have been greater than profits for the past year, and greater than what we would show as profits for the forthcoming year. For instance there was the item of £40,000 spent in 1904-5 for replacing obsolete rolling stock. That alone if spent out of revenue this year would make a big hole in the Minister's estimated profit. There were also £13,717 for new works and improvements, £13,000 for vacuum cylinders, and £1,000 for train pipes. These items of revenue expenditure in 1904-5 made nearly £70,000. So the comparison brought up by the Minister was not fair, nor one that should be given out to illustrate the good work done by the railways. There was a profit in 1904-5 of £22,744; last year it amounted to £128,000, or a difference of £106,000; but there was £79,000 spent in 1904-5 on work that could have been safely spread over 10, or perhaps 20 years; and the Minister would admit that expenditure was not fair expenditure for one year only.

The Minister for Railways: Say five years.

Mr. HOLMAN: That made another £80,000 that really brought the profit of the year 1904-5 to over £100,000. There was also the sum of £13,000 spent in that year for the fitting of vacuum brakes on trucks, and that would bring the profit

to £116,000 for that year. Then there was the item of £25,000 for new works and improvements of which only £14,000 was spent. These items would bring the profit of that year to last year's profit, namely £128,000. But the department in 1904-5 also spent £168,000 in wages and £37,500 in extra stores over the expenditure of last year; these items amounted to £200,000. So the profit in 1904-5 could be safely put down at over £328,000, which, compared with last year's profit, was better by £200,000. But instead of placing the work of improving the lines and stock on to loan funds, as was done now, the extra profit earned was spent in that direction. Of course the Minister was not responsible for the work done on the railways. The only thing he (Mr. Holman) took responsibility for was that when he was Minister for Railways he used his influence in keeping a large number of men employed in doing work absolutely necessary, and work that would fully repay the department, and in seeing that the men received a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. At that time the state of affairs was not good in the department, and the best thing to bring down the cost of maintenance and to save rolling stock was to bring the lines into thorough repair. That was why the work was pushed ahead in 1904-5. It was all very well for the present Minister to point out the profits made last year, but in justice to the Committee he should give absolute figures to show how much expenditure had been transferred to loan funds. But unfortunately, the people and members seemed to take too little interest in these matters. Members, especially on the Government side, were satisfied to hear the Minister making an optimistic speech showing the earnings of the railways, without any explanation as to the expenditure transferred to loan funds. He (Mr. Holman) merely gave these figures to show that with all the profits made last year the return was nothing in comparison with what was done when the Labour Government held office. It was brought before the Chamber on more than one occasion that when papers were moved for, dilapidated files were placed on the Table not

giving the information required. The papers laid on the Table in response to a motion he had moved affected a matter that took place two years after. But the Minister placed these on the top of the file, and an extract was taken from the papers and given to the newspapers.

The Minister for Railways: I had nothing to do with that. I believe the Commissioner kept papers separated from the general file and they may have referred to other files.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Sunday-time papers dealing with a matter that occurred two years later were kept and the Minister promptly placed them on the top of the file, and there was precis prepared for the Press dealing with a question which his motion did not include. Often papers placed on the Table were incomplete. He could go to the office of the railway union and get copies of some of the papers he had asked for; but they were not on the file placed on the Table. Minutes he had written did not appear on the file. That was a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. He did not know that the Minister was responsible, but when papers were called for the Minister should give the necessary instructions to compel their production, and if these instructions were given by the Minister, it was surprising that they were not carried out.

The Minister for Railways: The department assured me that these were all the papers they had.

Mr. HOLMAN: The records of the conferences held were kept, and if they were not in the possession of the department it showed a great deal of carelessness in connection with what was an important matter. He was pleased an agreement had been fixed up. No one was more pleased than himself when an agreement was arrived at between employer and employee. It was the best means of settling any dispute and it was to be hoped that the time would not be far distant when there would be an increase on the present rates. Unfortunately many employers, the Minister among them, appeared to hold the opinion that when an award was given, or an agreement made, the rates set down

should be the maximum to be paid to the employees; and that was the cause of a great many disputes, and would be the cause of great trouble if adopted in the future. The rates were supposed to be the minimum, but there should be a maximum to which the lower paid men could work up.

The Minister for Railways: That is how it is now. We have a fixed minimum and a maximum.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was regrettable outside employers had not adopted the same principle. It was to be hoped when the Minister would reply, the figures he (Mr. Holman) had given would be admitted as correct. We expected to have £20,000 increased profit next year, but in one fell swoop we were transferring £30,000 from revenue expenditure to loan expenditure; that was on the item for replacing obsolete rolling stock. It should be an increasing item instead of a reducing one. If we transferred the expenditure to loan we would have to pay the money just the same, and also interest. The Minister would agree that if the finances of the State were better it would have been one of the items that would never have disappeared from the Revenue Estimates. It was not fair to those who came after us. He had been sorry to hear the remark of the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton), who speaking as a practical man, said that the maintenance, the system of repairs, and the keeping in order of the rolling stock, had not been as it should be. In all probability those who followed the present Administration would have that handicap to make up. This question should be taken into consideration, and instead of bolstering up the finances in this way it would be better to show the people the true state of affairs. During the next few years the position of affairs in Western Australia would be acute and difficult to improve, and it would take all the brains of the Legislature to make the condition of affairs, generally, better than it was now. It would be far better if Western Australia now had the state of affairs that existed in 1904-5, when we spent £168,000 more in wages and another £35,000 in mate-

rial. Almost the whole of which would be spent among the wage-earners. If we were doing that now the general position of the State would be better than it was. If the same position existed for the next year as it had during the last year or two, and that was the squeezing out of the wages men and the spending of hundreds and thousands of pounds on those who came to the country only to get what they could out of it, the people of the State generally would suffer considerably. The sooner there was a change in the method of administration the better.

Mr. GILL: All were pleased to hear the remarks of the Minister in regard to the position of the railways. We naturally looked upon this, the largest earning department, with a great amount of solicitude. It was a huge spending and earning department, and when the Minister said that during the last two months good profits had been made, and that the prospects for the future were fairly bright, it was somewhat cheering. He could not agree with one remark made by the member for North Fremantle in alluding to the depression existing in the State. That gentleman said that it was very pleasing to know that although we had had a depression it had not affected the railways. The depression had affected not only the railways, but also a great many of those who had been employed there, and owing to that fact it had affected a great number of the people and the prosperity of the State. The earnings of the railways had not been so good as they should have been; they had decreased very considerably, and the Minister in stating that he had been so, said the earnings had been less owing to the fact that there was a reduction in the amount of the goods traffic, owing chiefly to a decrease in the carriage of metal, gravel, and minerals. While that was a fact there were also other elements which had brought about a reduction, as was shown by the remarks of the Commissioner of Railways in his annual report. He said, "The earnings from the goods are reduced almost equally with those from passengers. In this case, however, it is not a loss of traffic, but a reduction of

rates designed for the assistance of settlement, development of industries, and stimulation of traffic in the future to which the reduction must be principally attributed." That showed there were other directions which had affected the traffic very considerably. In reducing rates, and in granting concessions, which had been a big factor in decreasing the earnings of the railways, it had been necessary to reduce the staff, with the result that the railways had not been worked so satisfactorily as they should have been. He did not agree with those who said the railways were now being worked as they should be. The staff had been curtailed very considerably, far more than was necessary or advisable. There were very many complaints as to delays in goods traffic, and as to delays in the passenger traffic through the want of engines, passengers did not receive the attention they should, and those who went to the railway stations knew it was impossible to get the attention they had the right to demand. Some consideration should be given to the question of the concessions which had been granted, and as to whether they had been put to the best use or not. The thousands of pounds spent in this direction had caused a reduction in the income and had brought about retrenchment in the service. There was room for retrenchment in certain directions, for the service was overloaded somewhat in the country districts by the duplication of sidings and the necessary attendants for those sidings, but there was no doubt that the department had been far more overloaded in the clerical staff. In this direction there had not been that retrenchment which should have been entered upon, taking into consideration the conditions of the service. Some of the offices were now overloaded very considerably, and there could be a very big reduction without any detriment to the service. He did not desire to see a "Black Wednesday" in the department, and he regretted there had been any necessity for retrenchment, for the fact that it had been necessary explained greatly the depression the State was now suffering from. He desired to say a word or two with regard to the agreement between

the Commissioner and the men. He was very glad there had been such a successful ending to what appeared at one time to be rather a serious business. An agreement had been arrived at which was, apparently, satisfactory to both sides. That being so, he wished to express his pleasure; but, at the same time, he desired to take exception to one matter, and that was the 8s. minimum. He did not agree with the Minister that a three months probation was a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. He had taken no part in influencing the men, as it was not his duty to do so, but now the agreement was signed he had no hesitation in saying that if he had been one of the members of the committee who consulted with the Minister he would have sat until Christmas next year before agreeing to a three months probation.

The Minister for Railways: There is a definite agreement that no man retrenched shall be put on again at a lower salary than he previously received.

Mr. GILL: No one but the Government had ever asked for an apprenticeship for pick and shovel work, and he would never have agreed to a probationary period for labour. However, the men had accepted the position, and he was pleased that they were satisfied with it. There was one point he would touch on, and that was with regard to the casual hands on the railways. The custom had been for some time, and especially since the adoption of the flying-gang system, that where there was special work to do to last six weeks or two or three months, small gangs of eight, ten, and twelve men were taken on to attend to and complete this work. Those men were taken on at 7s. 6d. a-day, and before they had served their three months apprenticeship their work was completed. When another job came along of a similar nature they would be taken on again at 7s. 6d., and would have to work continually for those wages, unless they were fortunate enough to be taken on permanently. That was the unsatisfactory portion of the agreement. The Minister desired to take kudos to the department with regard to the 7s. Arbitration Court award. No credit should be given to the department for that, as the

Arbitration Court never said that 7s. was a living wage for railway men.

Mr. TROY: It was the minimum rate for the least competent men.

[Mr. Daglish resumed the Chair.]

The Minister for Railways: I said we had not taken advantage of it.

Mr. GILL: If the Minister had attempted to take advantage of it, he would have deserved to be treated unkindly. Unfortunately, there were too many who took advantage of the minimum provisions in the Arbitration Court awards, and that had caused more trouble than anything else. If the court were to fix a living wage instead of a wage for the least competent men there would be more satisfaction than at present existed. It was not right that a rate of wages should be fixed for invalids. The court awarded 7s. for old and decrepit men in the railway service. As to rolling stock, he quite agreed with the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) that steps should have been taken to provide for rolling stock in the Estimates. It was a fair and just charge on working railways for the rolling stock to be kept in order. Although the Minister stated that Mr. Hume said the rolling stock was in a better condition now than it ever was, it would be noticed that the Commissioner, in his report, showed that he was evidently anxious to get £40,000 this year to put the stock into the condition it should be in. The vote was reduced by £10,000 last year, and the Commissioner hoped to get £40,000 this year, and, perhaps, in addition, the £10,000 which was deducted last year.

The Minister for Railways: That is for replacement of rolling-stock, not putting it in order.

Mr. GILL: As the railways were a paying proposition it was reasonable and right that we should keep the rolling stock in good condition out of revenue. It was not his intention to go into figures. When we made comparisons with past years, there was a difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, because we all knew that in years gone by we spent a great deal out of revenue for making provision for rolling stock, and later spent a good deal out of loan. With re-

gard to the working expenses, of course they had been reduced, and necessarily reduced owing to the decrease of traffic. That was a thing that he could not understand in connection with the railways. Of course, there had been a decrease with regard to minerals and road metal. However, seeing that we had such an increase in the mileage, it appeared somewhat peculiar that there should be a decrease in the traffic. It naturally made one look to the spur lines to see whether they were doing their duty. There had been an increase in the spur lines, but if they were all worked on the principle mentioned to him only the other day, he could understand the reason why there had not been an increase in traffic. He was speaking the other day to a person who had taken up some land on the Great Southern line, some fifteen miles from the terminus of the Wagin-Dumbleyung railway. This man said that all the farmers around him, some fifteen in number, were carrying their wheat into Katanning in preference to sending it by rail. That was a most unsatisfactory state of affairs, seeing that we had built a railway to carry wheat. The farmers preferred to carry their wheat for a distance of 26 miles, and he, naturally, asked the reason.

The Minister for Works: That would make it 41 miles that they carried their wheat altogether.

Mr. GILL: These farmers were not 15 miles beyond the terminus of the railway; they were 26 miles from Katanning; close to Warrens. He asked them the reason, and they stated that they could not get any satisfaction out of the spur railway. They had no idea when they could get trucks, and they did not know when they could load, and there was no protection for their produce. The consequence was, that they preferred to carry it into Katanning, because they could get the accommodation they required, and quicker despatch. At Dumbleyung there was no certainty, and, in addition, they had to pay an extra shilling per ton. It occurred to him that it should be a simple matter to erect a shed of some kind at the railway terminus for the wheat. In future, some provision should be made for this accommodation when authority was given

for the construction of these lines. The chances were that this kind of thing happened not only on the Dumbleyung line, but on the other agricultural lines, and, of course, the department were not getting the best results from them. The Commissioner touched upon another subject, and it was right and proper that it should be dealt with in future when railway Bills were brought forward for consideration. It was that provision should be made in the Estimates for the rolling stock necessary to work the line. We had built during the last two or three years about 500 miles of railways without making any provision on the Estimates for rolling stock of any description. We had only sufficient rolling stock to work the lines in existence, and there must be a deficiency somewhere, or it would not be necessary to take money out of some other vote to provide the stock for new railways. The one satisfactory feature in connection with the Commissioner's report was his reference to the fact that the carriage of agricultural and garden produce was on the increase. When the time arrived that the agricultural areas were turning out wheat in large quantities, he agreed with the Minister, that then the railways would become a splendid paying proposition. Then, too, we would be in the position to reduce the rates and so assist those who were settling in the back country. Undoubtedly, it was a big handicap for those who were out-back to compete in the same market with those who were closer to the port. He was not going to deal further with regard to the railways. There was nothing new he could touch upon any further than one matter about which he intended to make a complaint. That was in connection with the working staff on the railways. The heads of departments had an unhappy knack of tyrannising over the men to a great extent. Members might say he had been listening to street and footpath rumors, but he was speaking of something which he knew to be absolutely true. A case came under his notice about two months ago, in which a young man employed at the Guildford station was ordered to go to Albany during Fleet week. While he was prepared to go, his father

was on a sick-bed; in fact, he was not expected to recover. The young man asked to be excused, and found another porter who volunteered to take his place. The head of the department insisted upon the young man going. This young man had been in the service for a number of years, and bore an excellent character. He explained the whole position by letter to the Chief Traffic Manager, pointing out that his father was seriously ill, and that he had secured the service of another porter to take his place, but no; the Chief Traffic Manager insisted upon this particular person going down, and the consequence was, he either had to go to Albany or leave the service. He chose to leave the service, and stick to his father, rather than go to Albany. That was not an isolated case, and it was the kind of thing which gave so much annoyance to the men in the service. There was no necessity for its existence, and if officers would only exercise a little commonsense or judicial forbearance, the railway service would be the most contented and the most satisfactory in Australia. He mentioned this matter to let the officers know that there was someone who was taking notice of these complaints. They were not a thing of to-day, they were a thing of years gone by. He himself had had to put up with them, and while he was in Parliament and they were brought under his notice, he would take every opportunity that presented itself of, making them known, and letting the officers know that he was prepared to voice complaints. He desired to mention the case of Mr. Booth, an officer who was retrenched, and it would be as well for the Minister to make a note of what he intended to say. The matter was brought under his notice during the last few days. Mr. Booth was retrenched from the service a few months ago: he was receiving £340 per annum, and after his retrenchment they put a man in his place at a salary of £200 per annum. Immediately afterwards, they engaged another man at about £150, and yet another was imported from England at £250 a year, and finally it finished up that there were two persons working in Mr. Booth's place and drawing about £500 a year. That looked to him like a

little bit of tyranny, because Mr. Booth was one of those gentlemen who had no hesitation in speaking his mind when the occasion arose. That being the case, it looked as if Mr. Booth was not required. He was not going to mention any further cases, although there were several genuine complaints which he could bring forward. He would like to see the railway service happy and contented. There was no reason why it should not be so. He was satisfied that with a little forbearance on the part of the officers the railway service could be satisfactorily worked, for the next few years at all events.

Mr. SWAN: The State was to be congratulated upon the profits shown by the Railway Department during the past year. But while this department was paying a large amount of money to the Consolidated Revenue each year, members showed but comparatively little interest in its condition. The department had to bear the burden of concessions in the way of timber freights and freights on coal and agricultural produce. Members seemed to care little what the results of this might be. So far as he was concerned the condition was not at all satisfactory, nor was the system well balanced. The general public were to a large extent being sacrificed for the purpose of feeding up timber and coal combines and other such corporations. The Collie coal was in itself a sufficient burden for the railways to bear. At the present time the railways were paying more than what the coal was worth in order that the industry might be assisted. He had no objection to this being done, because he believed it was a wise policy to develop local industries. But so far as the complaint of the member for West Perth was concerned, he (Mr. Swan) did not believe that it would be to the benefit of either the railways or the State that the orders for Collie coal should be equally distributed. Some of the coals mentioned by the member for West Perth were entirely unsuited for locomotive purposes notwithstanding the fact that they might show higher calorific values than did others. He had been told recently that the question of agricultural railways

was a matter of policy. Perhaps it was; but was it fair to ask the working railways to bear the losses that must accrue on those agricultural lines and at the same time expect those working railways to show a large profit? They did show such large profit—but how? It was certainly not by dispensing with the services of the higher paid officials. The number of resident engineers, surveyors, inspectors, and foremen was somewhat startling to any hon. member glancing down the Estimates. It seemed that there was in this State a far larger proportion of that class of employee than in any other State of the Commonwealth. The case mentioned by the member for Balkatta was one of those instances in which the department had taken credit for retrenching comparatively higher paid officials. But what sort of economy was it when the man retrenched was replaced by two others whose aggregate salaries amounted to something like £150 more than had been paid to the man dispensed with? Again it would be found that in nearly every case of boasted economy in the Railway Department it was the man receiving 7s. or 8s. a day who was the victim. As already pointed out by other members, rolling stock was required for the new agricultural lines. In his opinion it was not necessary to build new rolling stock for this purpose. He thought that on investigation it would be found that there were a number of locomotives thrown on one side about Midland Junction which could well be utilised for the running of these agricultural railways. With regard to the method of carrying out repairs he had no desire to set himself up as a critic of that department, for he recognised that in some instances splendid work was being done at the Midland Junction workshops. Still on the other hand there was in existence there a system of penny-wise-and-pound-foolish. When a locomotive went into the workshop for an overhaul, it was of no real advantage to skim the work for the sake of saving a few pounds at the moment. A certain class of locomotives simply performed a trip through the sheds, getting what was called a kerosene overhaul. Because so few cleaners were employed in the general service,

when these locomotives came to the workshops the opportunity was taken of giving them a thoroughly good clean. The way in which the locomotive running sheds was managed was a disgrace, and some of the officers in charge were not fit for their positions, having out-lived their usefulness in some instances, and in other instances being of no use at all. The Perth yard was very badly managed. It was a first-class institution for getting rid of employees, and it would be interesting to know how many people had died in that establishment from preventable causes. He had worked nine years in the shed and knew his subject. The shed was quite unfit to work in during the winter. Some of the men affected by the agreement recently entered into were working in this shed, shovelling stuff like flour, and filling their lungs with it as long as they lasted, and that was not very long. It was work one would not do for 10s. a day, and yet all that these men had got for this man-killing job was 7s. No wonder there was complaint about agitators and discontent in the department. Probably the Minister was not aware of this particular instance. At any rate the Minister should give credit to those looking after the interests of the employees as to their honesty of purpose in endeavouring to make these men's positions more comfortable. Not only was the work disagreeable, but there were tyrannical officers, as mentioned by the member for Balkatta, making the lot of the worker harder. If it was intended by the department to fairly, not to say liberally, interpret the agreement entered into, there was no need for the three months' probationary period. He could not help being suspicious, though not naturally so, because he had had some experience in dealing with this matter of probation. There was no need for it, but the department would not have fought for it unless it were to be used as a loophole.

The Minister for Railways : We have not done it in the past.

Mr. SWAN: It had been done.

The Minister for Railways : Then you kept it to yourself and have not come to me.

Mr. SWAN: It had been dealt with in the constitutional way, and he had not always run to the Ministers with his troubles. Men had been penalised in this way. Men might be employed from the 1st January to immediately before Christmas, and were put off then, no doubt in many instances to evade paying them the holidays due for a full 12 months' service. He had continually seen the same set of men put off and put on again, in some cases within a day or half a day. He had known them to be put off at 11 o'clock on Saturday and put on again on Monday morning. Their service was broken for only one hour, but that robbed them of their holiday pay. The late Commissioner had tried to set this right, but one was informed that it still went on under the present Commissioner.

The Minister for Railways: Have you brought it before him?

Mr. SWAN: Cases of this description had been brought before the Commissioner by the organisation representing the men, he believed. He had no desire to tear the agreement to pieces, though there were other things in it he was not satisfied with: but if the representatives of the men were satisfied they were the people to bear the responsibility. Members must remember that comparatively few men were affected by the agreement. A great deal had been given away by the men's representatives in order that an amicable settlement might be arrived at, and recourse either to the Arbitration Court or the old-fashioned method of striking be averted. The men had given away far too much. He did not believe the higher officers of the department realised the number of cases of injustice that still went on. At the Midland Junction workshops there were a fair number of men who had the misfortune to be classed as labourers, notwithstanding the fact that they were doing work which required a certain amount of skill. These men were persistently refused an increase beyond 8s. It was absurd for any man to say that a stipend of 8s. was suitable for a body of men in a big workshop of that description. Any man of experience would know that some of these men were worth

1s. or 2s. a day more than others. Many men who were worth 9s. or 10s. a day were classed as labourers. Some of the officers would be only too willing to give those men more money, but, unfortunately, the policy of the department seemed to be economy all the time. It was this sort of thing that caused a discontented service. It was only a fair thing that a huge department of this description, which was paying such a vast amount yearly to the Consolidated Revenue, should at least deal out justice to every employee. Members would remember that the successful working of a department did not depend entirely upon the heads of the department, for one of the greatest factors was the contentment of the men engaged. A man satisfied with his position, feeling he was being fairly treated, would give 50 per cent. better work than a man who felt he was working under an injustice. There were cases where men fancied they were being unjustly dealt with, whereas their troubles were purely imaginary, but there were scores of cases where the men were not fairly treated. One particular instance in the workshops was that of a man who, at some time or another during the year, was responsible for the life of every man in the shop. He was responsible for the heavy lifting about the shops, and the carrying from one portion of the works to another of completed locomotives, loads to the extent of 50 or 60 tons, which passed over the heads of every employee at work. He was engaged in making the slings, etcetera, but was only classed as a labourer, and for three years while he (Mr. Swan) was in the shops received only 8s. a day wages. Recently, however, he had received an increase, and now got 8s. 6d. The present Chief Mechanical Engineer was well aware of the true value of that man. All the men asked for was a fair deal, but they could not get it. The Minister had pointed out that there was a provident fund and a death benefit fund in connection with the service, but those funds were due to the organisation of the employees. Certainly some of the officers had given valuable services. There was also the

question of the technical education of apprentices in the workshops. That was an excellent idea, and young men in the engineering trade here had advantages, not existing anywhere in the States, and possibly, not in the world. They received far more liberal terms as apprentices than he had done or anyone he knew. There was no reason why increases should be denied to such low-paid persons as the cadets. It was paltry to refuse them increases considering what the department was paying to the general revenue. A body of men in the service who were very unjustly treated were the cleaners. They were not affected by the recent agreement, for they came under the agreement of the running branch, and unfortunately the organisation that represented them had accepted an agreement providing for a minimum for cleaners of 7s. 6d. a day. There were many men there who had families and who had worked in the department for 10 years, and yet were only receiving 7s. 6d. a day. Their work was the filthiest of any in the department. They had to work for practically half the year at night, and much of their work was done in the open. Some of the men had previously been firemen, and had done that work for two or three years, but the depression had necessitated retrenchment, and they were put back to the position of cleaners and reduced from 8s. or 9s. a day to 7s. 6d. That was an absolute injustice, and he hoped that something would be done to lighten the burden of those men. Another lot of men not being treated fairly were the night officers. They were men who were not connected in any way with the Wages Associations; if they were they might be in a better position. The night officers were employed throughout the country, and worked for twelve hours, and in many cases their rate of pay amounted to 7s. He hoped that members generally would take a little more interest in railway matters; he particularly referred to members on the Ministerial side of the House. In fact on both sides of the House members invariably displayed indifference when railway matters were being discussed.

Mr. JACOBY: No doubt a good many of the instances brought forward by members opposite with regard to the injustices suffered by men in the various branches of the department were founded on fact, but hon. members must remember that there were a good many instances where full justice was not done by the employees, where men engaged in the different branches of the service were not doing a fair thing to the State. It was fortunate we had in the Railway Department a large body of men who were a first-class lot, and who were doing their duty to the State, but he had heard indirectly of instances in the Midland Junction workshops where there was not that desire to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Mr. Swan: There are not many instances.

Mr. JACOBY: The hon. member knew of these instances, and it would be only fair to cite some of them, as well as the others. With regard to the general administration of this department, he wished to express his satisfaction that there had been some decided attempt to bring the working expenses down towards something approaching a reasonable amount. It had long been a matter for surprise to those who had made a casual study of the system of the Eastern States to find that our working expenses were so extraordinarily high. We must welcome a reduction of those extravagances in administration that were bringing the working expenses to within a reasonable limit. Whilst we recognised that in this department the State should be prepared to give the best possible wage to the best class of labourers, we also expected to get the best possible work. He wished to express surprise at the action of the Government, particularly the Minister for Railways, in connection with the freight rates on agricultural produce, and while he freely admitted that in the present state of the finances we had to be very cautious in anything we did, the Government had pledged themselves to certain reductions. If the Government were satisfied that these reductions could not take place, they should have made no

promises. The Minister for Railways promised a deputation at Katanning that the freights on agricultural produce would be reduced, and that promise was not kept. In reply to a question he asked in this House, he was informed that the new rates would come into operation about last October but nothing further had been heard of the matter.

The Minister for Railways: It was done, and the rates came into force in December.

Mr. JACOBY: The Government made a definite promise that these rates would come into force some time ago.

The Minister for Railways: I have told the hon. member they came into force on the 1st December.

Mr. JACOBY: The Government should recognise the importance also of doing everything within reason towards facilitating the export of produce. It was extremely important to this State that every endeavour should be made to encourage that branch of our trade to bring wealth into the State. We were suffering a depression for the reason that in the State of actual cash, there was a shortage, and we should facilitate as far as we could the export of all produce. We found a difficulty had arisen recently at Fremantle by the department not being able to satisfactorily handle the large amount of grain which was being sent there for export. Such difficulties were certain to arise when new businesses like that suddenly came up and required to be coped with. He wished to point out that where there were no facilities to handle stuff, it was extremely unfair to penalise wheat by charging excessive demurrage rates. He quite agreed with the stand taken by the Government in the matter of rates upon timber for export: for the reason that he felt it was necessary to the welfare of the State that they should do all they possibly could to encourage the export of produce. In the matter of fruit an export trade was being steadily built up, and it was anticipated that several thousand cases of surplus grapes would leave the State this year. There was as yet no special export rate for this class of

freight; perhaps when taking this matter into consideration the Minister would see if he could not do something to facilitate the export of this line of produce. He wished again to enter his protest against the railways being utilised for the encouragement of special industries without getting any remuneration at all from the general revenues of the State. He had particularly in view the matter of Collie coal, where by special freight and in other ways the Government were giving a bonus to the industry. In other directions too, the Railway Department had been penalised in order to encourage certain industries. In such cases it was only a fair business proposition that the loss incurred by the railways in so encouraging these industries should be made up by the Treasury. An instance of this had occurred in Victoria, where the Government had sought to specially encourage the production of brown coal. The Railway Department had suffered in consequence, but the loss was made good to the Railways by the Treasury. So too, in regard to Collie coal, any loss sustained by the Railway Department should be made up by the Treasury. He wished to express his appreciation of the great assistance rendered by the Railway Department in respect to the export of fruit. Each request made had been met, and it was largely owing to the special care taken by the department in the handling of various classes of fruit that the producers had been able to land their fruit in such condition at oversea ports as to invariably secure the highest prices ruling. In this regard everything depended upon the care taken in the handling of the fruit until it reached the ship's side, and in this the Railway Department had rendered excellent service. He regretted that he could not say the same with regard to fruit railed for the local market. Unfortunately this class of traffic did not loom up in the eyes of the department as did certain other traffic. It did not mean much for the department, although it meant a great deal for the producer. Fruit for the local market received very rough treatment on the railways, which resulted in its arriving in a damaged

condition; in consequence growers had been forced to market fruit practically unripe, this being the only way in which they could secure its arrival in a condition for sale. A great deal yet remained to be done by the department in respect to giving proper facilities for the handling of this traffic. What had been done for the fruit for export could of course be done for the fruit for the local market. Western Australia was destined to become a very large fruit producing country, and in order to help it to that end he hoped that an improvement would be shown in the handling of this produce by the Railway Department. He hoped, too, that the Minister when replying would tell the Committee something about the promise made for the carriage of fertilisers at a very much reduced rate. He was not aware that the promise had been fulfilled.

The Minister for Railways: Oh yes, a long time ago. Fertilisers are now carried at a farthing per ton per mile.

Mr. JACOBY: It was gratifying to know that these reductions had been made. Although in the first instance it might mean a loss of revenue to the department, yet the extra crop that would result from the more extensive use of fertilisers would in the end fully recoup the department.

Mr. ANGWIN moved—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	..	20

Majority against .. 4

AYES.

Mr. Angwin
Mr. Bath
Mr. Collier
Mr. Gill
Mr. Heltman
Mr. Helman
Mr. Horan
Mr. Hudson
Mr. Johnson

Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Swan
Mr. Underwood
Mr. Walker
Mr. Ware
Mr. Troy

(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Butcher
Mr. Carson
Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Davies
Mr. Draper
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Hayward
Mr. Jacoby
Mr. Keenan

Mr. Male
Mr. Monger
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Osborn
Mr. Plesse
Mr. Price
Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Layman
(Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. ANGWIN: It was regrettable that it should be necessary to deal with such an important question at such a late hour. It was doubtful whether the retrenchment policy in the railways would bear the conclusion arrived at by the majority of people. The retrenchment was mainly among those earning low wages.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.25 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 27th January, 1909.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL SHOW, NATIONAL.

Hon. G. THROSSELL asked the Colonial Secretary: With the object of affording the largest number of people the opportunity of seeing the capabilities of the lands of the State will the Government consider the advisability of holding