

Coventry Parade and Christina Parade, North Fremantle, to be dedicated to the public use. These are small streets in the North Fremantle municipality, and owing to the Municipalities Act requiring streets to be of certain width, the municipality of North Fremantle have not been able to improve these streets in any way, and they have become an eyesore. According to the Municipal Act, streets must be a certain width before municipal funds can be expended on them. These streets were laid out years ago and were far less than the regulation width. They have remained unimproved for some years past. The municipality asked that a Bill be introduced to enable these streets to be improved. I investigated the matter, and saw that it was a public necessity.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

HON. J. M. DREW moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until three o'clock to-morrow. He was sure members would be only too ready to assist the Government to bring the session to a conclusion by assembling an hour and a-half earlier than usual.

Question passed.

The House adjourned accordingly at 17 minutes past nine o'clock, until three p.m. the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 22nd December, 1904.

	PAGE
Petition: Mrs. Eliza Tracey	2172
Urgency Motion: Fires in Agricultural Districts, Coal Sparks	2172
Privilege: Mr. Gregory's Complaint against Mr. Moran, reconciliation	2193
Questions: Gold Buyers' Licenses, Boulder	2198
Government Advertising	2198
Inebriate Retreat, to establish	2199
Railway Crossings, East Perth	2199
Hamel Experimental Farm	2199
Annual Estimates resumed, Railways vote, Labour vote; Committee of Ways and Means, reported	2199
Bills: Permanent Reserves Rededication, all stages	2224
Land Act Amendment (Forestry), second and third readings	2224
Local Inscribed Stock Act Amendment, in Committee, third reading	2228
Inspection of Machinery, Council's Amendments	2228
Local Courts, Council's Amendments	2228
Distress for Rent Restriction, Council's Amendments	2229
Bills of Exchange, second and third readings	2230
Private Bill: Kalgoorlie and Boulder Racing Clubs, Council's Amendments	2229

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair at 2:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION—MRS. ELIZA TRACEY.

MR. F. F. WILSON presented a petition signed by about 500 residents in the State, including some members of both Houses of Parliament, praying the House to take into consideration the recommendation of the select committee of the last Parliament to the effect that a compassionate allowance be granted to Eliza Tracey.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member should have presented the petition as soon as the House met, immediately notices were called for. On this occasion he did not propose to place any obstacle in the way, if the House did not object.

Petition received.

URGENCY MOTION—FIRES IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS.

COAL SPARKS.

MR. R. G. BURGESS (York): I beg leave to move the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed.

MR. BURGESS: My motion is in reference to the use of Collie coal on the railways. I think it has come pretty well under the notice of everyone, by the reports in the newspapers, that serious

losses have been caused by fires started between Spencer's Brook and Burges's siding. I know of one place myself where there was a fire on Tuesday morning, caused by the train which left Perth about a quarter-past six. It runs much faster than the ordinary train every other day, and that is principally the cause why this train is generally the one which sets the country on fire. It was the same a few years back, when a special train ran from Albany. If that train ran late in the day, we had a fire in the whole country, whichever way the wind was blowing. Now we come to the same thing by the use of Collie coal. They are running a fast train, and when they come up any incline and have any extra weight, the coal explodes and there is a fire. This is a matter I have been to the Minister for Railways about for the last month or six weeks. I went to him only last week, and was going to bring the matter up before the House, but he assured me the railways were not using Collie coal. I was coming down by train from York last Tuesday, and Mr. Wyley was coming down from Newcastle to buy some sheep, with another business man, and when we got to Clackline we found two fires had been started by No. 26 train. We had to get out and proceed to that fire. Only a week previously I spoke to the Minister for Railways. Mr. Wyley then had a large part of his paddock burnt by a train coming from the goldfields; that was a little farther on. Mr. Wyley has on one or two occasions communicated with the Government in reference to the matter. It is an extraordinary thing that the Government should burn this coal when they know they are throwing such a burden on the people of the State, and that they must be answerable at law for any damage done. I asked a question some time back in the House, and they acknowledged they were burning about 20 per cent. of Collie coal. A party went through the files to get statements, and there was great trouble experienced. The men are afraid to give them. After these fires the member for Northam and a member of the Upper House put the matter before the Commissioner at once. The Commissioner told us—I am not going to make untruthful statements, but I will state what I

know to be true, and the hon. member can verify my statement—that he was burning Collie coal and did not want to burn it, but could not stop burning it without instruction from the Minister. Responsible men—I will not give their names—and engineers know that this coal is a nuisance. The member for Northam asked me to go to the Minister for Railways only on Tuesday evening when all this damage had been done, although not known to us, and he told us they were not using Collie coal. What was the consequence of the use of this Collie coal? Only the other day a lot of settlers, only poor men, were burnt out and ruined. I am surprised that any people should support a matter of this kind, when it is known to the present and has been known to past Governments that this has been continually occurring. Since these heavily-loaded trains have been running and have used Collie coal we have always had this trouble. Previously when the matter has been brought to the notice of the Government we have had redress almost immediately. The state of things existing is a source of danger, annoyance, and everlasting worry to the people living in those dry areas, particularly when our crops are on the ground. I ask the member for Northam to verify my statement. We do not want to prevent the burning of Collie coal, but I ask that the use of it shall be stopped while our crops are on the ground; even if we are likely to sacrifice our paddocks and stock afterwards, which ought not to be the case. If we are to settle people in this country we shall have to give them different treatment and have some different legislation, so that they shall know that when they come here they will receive justice. We know what the ex-Minister for Railways told us of the number of claims for damages made against the Government and locked up in a secret box in the department; and there are more claims to follow. The department have evidently allowed this to go on; and what is the result? Many small men are practically ruined. They have nothing left except a little corn. At one place near where the fire started, a farmer, though assisted by all my sons, was unable to save his harness and his oats; for though the flames were at first beaten back, a change of wind proved fatal, and but for another

change of wind not one vestige of any of his possessions would have remained. Beyond that place another man has lost everything except a little corn. Beyond that holding, another neighbour of mine, a small farmer, had a crop of wheat—300 to 500 sacks—burnt down to the ground. Many of his sheep are burnt to ashes, and many more are crippled. I will not say anything of my own loss, for I can stand the loss; but I say that the neglect of the department is scandalous, disgraceful, and criminal. If I had a hand in such neglect, I should deserve imprisonment. Whatever may be the consequences—even if I be imprisoned where Drayton was, or in the darkest of dark cells—I will say what I think on the matter. I feel inclined to act like Edmund Burke when in the House of Commons he stuck a knife in the floor of the Chamber as he described the horrors perpetrated in India by Warren Hastings. Who can go before an honest jury and maintain that anyone who had a hand in causing these fires is not a criminal? I intend to brand one or two men who had a hand in this outrage; and if I do not brand them now, I shall do so when I reply. I shall not be backward in speaking, whatever the consequence may be, when I see land burnt to destruction after years of toil expended on it. Farmers are told by a certain party that their land will be taxed if they do not improve it; but the more the land is improved the more liable are they to be burnt out. The other day, when speaking to the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) about this matter, I told him openly that this agricultural country would be ruined. I am sorry that my prophecy has come true, in his case as well as in mine. Every day the question is becoming more serious. The more country we improve, the more there is to burn; and when under crop, a spark will make it burn almost like gunpowder. A few years ago, when none but good patches of country were cultivated, these were interspersed with unimproved strips and with hills, so that the danger of a serious fire was minimised. But this fire swept over hills where the timber is rung, and down to the cultivated plain, where there is a large group of farms close to the town of Northam, including some held by the

sons of the late Mr. Monger, who lost almost every acre of their corn. It destroyed almost all the produce of certain other farmers—sturdy young men from the Eastern States. No one can say that there has not been gross negligence. Some features of the case I will pass over, though they will perhaps come out. If agricultural members were united in this matter, these fires would not occur. But when they are divided, when the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) votes here and there at pleasure and sometimes leaves the Chamber rather than vote, what can we expect? If I have to stand up in this House alone, to fight single-handed the battles of the agriculturists, we can expect nothing.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: This is not a party question.

MR. BURGESS: I am not treating it as a party question. Mr. Speaker can stop me if my statements are out of order. If agricultural members are not united, we cannot reasonably expect support from members who have no knowledge of agriculture. We cannot blame Government supporters, who do not know the seriousness of the position, for not supporting us; but we can blame men who ought to fight this battle day by day as I have fought it. I appeal to the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piesse) to say whether a few days ago I did not speak to him at Spencer's Brook about the danger of fire from engine sparks. Consider all the representations made in the House, and particularly to the Minister for Railways, and made in vain. Travel over the railway, and we see a break cleared three feet or four feet wide along the line; but all the logs are left lying there, and if they are once set alight, they will burn till nothing remains but ashes.

MR. MORAN: That is the Commissioner's fault.

MR. BURGESS: With that I have nothing to do. The danger exists. The Minister for Railways does not know the seriousness of the position. He promised that due precautions should be taken when burning off was done inside the railway fences. But what occurred? No special gang was sent to supervise the work; only the ordinary fettlers. Moreover, it is no use burning off inside

the fences if the engines use Collie coal. The only conclusion I can come to in the matter is that the use of Collie coal must be stopped for two or three months in the year, at any rate, so that farmers may get in their crops. For years past I have told this House what would occur; that if a fire sprang up during a strong northerly or easterly wind, the whole country might be swept. This fire started on the patchy side of the country. Had it started near Northam, and the wind had not changed, there would not have been a homestead left in the neighbourhood. Only three or four years ago a fire swept over Mr. Hamersley's fields, and burnt all the corn and hay around the house. During the recent fire there were many narrow escapes from death. The wife of an old settler in the district described the fire to me as a rolling mass of flame like the waves of the sea, before which nothing could stand. I point this out to show the danger. There was a crop of oats self-sown which had just been stripped and fed down in August, and there was a big firebreak in the paddock; but the fire came over the break and burnt sheep against the fence. I asked the farmer if the fire could not be stopped at that point, but he said he could not go near the flames; and that was nothing to where the grass was on fire. All the farmers say the same thing. It was impossible to do anything. There is a series of these fires. We often see the statement that houses and churches in other States are burnt through such fires. That will happen here when we get the country developed, on one of these hot stormy days; for everything will be burnt up for 20 or 30 miles. I point this out to show the national loss incurred through these fires. How can we expect a man like the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher), who has spent the best days of his life up North, and has now come down with vigour, money, and experience to help to assist this agricultural country, to do so when before he is there three months a spark from a railway engine takes away the whole of his profits? Is that encouragement? Do members wish to let a thing of this sort go on another day? I hope not. I hope something will be done.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. That is the practical part of it.

MR. BURGESS: There are other matters upon which I shall not touch, but I say again that the Minister for Railways should not be so neglectful over this matter. It does not matter what statement the Minister may make, he can, I am positive, give no justification. I only hope that now steps will be taken to stop a recurrence of these fires; because if they go on we may expect the information to be published throughout the world, and it will do no good to us in our endeavours to get people to come here. People only settle now where a break in the forest occurs and where the grasses grow heavily; and it is these places in which we would put new settlers; but these are the places that catch fire. I hope we shall have some satisfactory assurance from the Government that this practice will be stopped now, and that in future better means will be taken for clearing a firebreak. In opening new railway lines, let the Government reserve three chains to make it pretty safe to use Collie coal in the summer months. Something must be done, or there will be a national loss, and the Government will have to bear the responsibility. The Government have already paid claims put in, and they must bear the responsibility of their neglect. But the taxpayer has to pay in the long run. The Government burn the land one day and tax the people the next day to pay for it. How can people bear taxation when the produce they have raised with so much trouble is swept away by one little spark caused through the neglect of those using the railways? I formally beg to move the adjournment of the House.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Katanning): I rise to support the motion. I feel that the emphatic words that we have heard to-day very clearly describe the trouble of the people resident in the district represented by the hon. member and other promising districts, especially Beverley. The devastation by these fires has been brought particularly under notice during the last few days, and one can see that in making this emphatic statement the member for York, although a sufferer, has spoken with the feelings of a sympathetic farmer, one who recognises the great loss others have sustained; because many will not be so well able to

bear the loss as the hon. member himself. The member for York has brought this forward with a view to preventing a recurrence of these fires. In this instance we have heard that the fire originated on the western side of the railway. We have been fortunate in that respect. No doubt the fire has caused trouble and desolation in a part of the country which a few days ago showed every promise of an abundant harvest; but had it occurred on the eastern side of the railway, the loss would have been almost incalculable, thousands of acres of wheat would be destroyed and ruin would have been brought to a number of people. Nevertheless we cannot disparage the loss sustained by the few who have suffered. Though one of the strongest advocates of the use of Collie coal, I have alluded to the danger of its use in this House; and while Minister, when it was brought under my notice and after repeated warnings, though the warning in this case is more serious, I prohibited the use of the coal during certain months of the year. It is the duty of any Government and of the administrator of the railways that care should be taken in the use of this coal, which is recognised as most inflammable, during the summer months. The Collie coal is of a light nature and is carried by the winds beyond the fire-breaks usually provided; and it was through a case of this kind when a strong north-east wind was blowing that this trouble arose. In calm weather the flying embers or coals usually fall beneath the engine or within the area burnt-off, and no fires are then caused; but coming out of the Beverley station I have seen within the distance of 10 chains as many as 14 fires lighted by sparks from the engine when going up a slight incline. At that time there was little destruction caused, but it was sufficient warning, and I was able to take action immediately, with the result that we heard little of these fires for some time to come. Damages have been given against the Government in several actions taken, and the Government are doing everything in their power to prevent losses occurring. This matter has previously been brought under the notice of the Minister by several agricultural members, and also under the notice of the Commissioner; but we find that the recommendations appear to

have been disregarded. I quite agree with the member for York that it is a most serious circumstance, for great losses occur. I think the country is to be congratulated upon the fact that the fire did not break out on the other side of the line; because the loss would in that case have run into thousands and thousands of pounds, probably £20,000 or £30,000. It is all a question of prevention, and prevention is better than cure. I was one of the first to assist in the development of the Collie coal industry which we all wish to see developed; but knowing the danger of this fuel, it is most negligent on the part of those concerned to use it after the warnings and the strong expression of opinion we have had from the hon. member; and every step should be taken for the time being to stop the use of the coal in the agricultural districts. The Government may shelter themselves behind certain provisions which do not bring liability upon them; yet no Government would like to see the destruction caused as in this instance; and I am confident the present Government will do their best to prevent a recurrence of these fires. At the same time they have been negligent in not looking into the matter earlier with a view to preventing the use of the coal, as was suggested by the agricultural members who interviewed both the Minister and the Commissioner. The member for York has spoken strongly, and I agree with him that there is necessity for strong words. The hon. member sees the matter in its utter desolation, and knows the devastation which brings ruin to many and destroys so many marks of progress during the year. It is most discouraging to the farmer who, after his hard work, is looking forward to the prospect of reaping a reward. When we look at the matter plainly we see all this devastation might be prevented. Under the circumstances I support the hon. member, who was quite justified in bringing forward the motion. The object the hon. member seeks to attain can be attained in the way he indicates; and it is the duty of the Government to see we do not have a recurrence of the losses such as we have experienced in the past few days.

MR. C. HARPER (Beverley): I rise to express my extreme regret at the

course taken by those responsible for these fires. Not only this year, but for the last six or seven years we have brought before the Government the extreme danger to the community in the use of Collie coal on railway locomotives, no matter what precautions are taken. I regret to say that on this occasion there is something more than mere neglect. The member for York and the member for Northam and others brought this matter before the Government; and as I understood, we had a distinct assurance that orders had been given that Collie coal should not be used. We find it has been used right along. On Tuesday morning, that very hot day, I said to the Minister for Railways that I dreaded the day, because I had been informed that Collie coal was still in use. I think the member for Katanning had assured me that morning that he knew it was in use, and I feared that what had occurred in the past would occur again. I think we want to know something more about this. We want to sheet the matter home to whoever is responsible for it. Whether the matter goes into court or not, we ought to have some inquiry, so as to sheet the matter home to whoever is responsible, and make an example of him. Anyone in the Public Service who would be guilty of such a wanton act as to use that coal, knowing the results, I say deserves to receive a year or two in prison.

MR. W. J. BUTCHER (Gascoyne) : It is my intention to support the motion moved by the member for York, and I can do so most heartily. It is usual, when an event happens, for everyone to be particularly wise, and the usual remark is, "I told you so." That is what everybody is saying in different parts of the city this morning. The member who has just spoken, with myself and two or three others, interviewed the Minister for Railways some time ago, and told him what would happen if certain steps were not taken, and certain precautions made. I regret sincerely to find that, in the face of a most distinct promise to the effect that Collie coal, to which we attribute the cause of the fire, would not in future be used on the railways running through the agricultural districts, this coal has been used. I intend to deal in detail with this particular part of the

question, because I desire to sheet home to the Minister the fact that he has neglected to carry out the promise which he made. I repeat what the Minister said, and I challenge anyone to contradict it. He told the deputation that he thoroughly understood the position, and sympathised with them in the matter, that he realised the danger and the risk that was being run by the use of Collie coal, and that he would issue instructions that no more Collie coal was to be used on the railways I have referred to. Every time I have visited Beverley—a place where I, unfortunately, hold some property—since the date of that deputation, I have examined the coal used on the engine that has conveyed me to that centre; and on every occasion I have found Collie coal being used, not wholly, but a considerable percentage. I have examined the coal in the station yards with the same result. It is clearly to be seen that neither the Government nor the Minister have the slightest intention of carrying out the pledge made to the deputation.

MR. FOULKES : When was the promise given ?

MR. BUTCHER : A month or six weeks ago. Are we justified in supporting and fostering and spoon-feeding an industry which, I admit, is an important one for the State, and at the same time sacrificing one of the largest industries in the State, one which we are doing our utmost to improve and foster ? We are doing our best to get people from other parts of the world to come and settle on our land on the one hand, and on the other hand we are destroying people's property as fast as they can improve it. It is criminal negligence on the part of the Government. I regret to use such strong words, but I feel I am justified in doing so. I say there has been criminal negligence on the part of the Minister in not seeing that instructions were issued, and, if instructions were issued, in not seeing they were carried out. If the Minister issued instructions to the department and the department has ignored them, is not the Minister responsible to the country ? We understand that the Commissioner is omnipotent in Western Australia at present; but it only requires a little strength of character to overrule the

Commissioner's desires in that direction. I regret sincerely that the member for York, in moving the motion, should have decended to party matters. I consider this is a question far above party. It is a matter that the country is interested in. It is a broad question.

MR. GORDON: You said "criminal neglect" just now.

MR. BUTCHER: It is not a matter for party, but a matter in which every member of the community should be as one. It is the duty of the Government to assist or prevent the devastation of one of the principal industries of the State, in preference to spoon-feeding or assisting an industry which all recognise and cannot shut our eyes to the fact that it is a dying industry, for we know that Collie coal is not of good quality, and therefore should not be used on the railways at such dangerous times of the year as the last month and the first two months of the year. I hope members who are interested in farming communities will support the motion, and that it will have the desired effect of inducing the Minister to take steps to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster as that which has occurred in the Beverley, York, and Northam districts.

MR. A. WATTS (Northam): I am sorry the necessity has arisen for this motion. At the same time, I think the trouble could have been avoided. It is now a considerable time since the attention of the Minister was called to the danger arising from the use of Collie coal through the farming districts in the summer time. I brought the matter under discussion when the Bush Fires Bill was before the House; and many members who spoke also referred to the question. This matter certainly should have been attended to long ago, either by the Minister in charge of the railways or by the Commissioner for Railways; and I consider it a scandalous shame, no matter whom it may affect, the Minister or the Commissioner, that attention has not been paid to this matter before now, that settlers have been burnt out of their homes. At present, as the member for Beverley pointed out, if a fire had started on the eastern side of the railway line, we would have had more country burnt out than has been the case. As far as Northam is concerned, if a fire started on

one of our particularly hot days on the north side of the line, it would sweep out the whole of that agricultural country on the northern side. If some little interest is not shown in the farmers of the country by those in charge of the Railway Department, it is about time we asked for a change somewhere or other. As to the statement made by the member for York, regarding the conversation with the Commissioner for Railways and also with the Minister for Railways, I can bear out what has been said—both what the hon. member said was stated by the Commissioner for Railways, as reported in the newspaper to-day, and also by the Minister for Railways. An endeavour has been made to assure people that the fire was not started by the use of Collie coal. Those who have experience of the running of trains will bear me out when I say that fires are caused by the use of Collie coal. When one sees a train going along a railway line, and immediately after sees fires here and there, there can be no doubt that the fires have arisen from the coal which has been dropped. When Collie coal is drying, it scales off in flakes, and these flakes are carried, if there is a wind, right outside the boundary of the railway fence. It is said farmers do not make any provision to minimise the risk of being burnt out; but in many cases they do. I have seen where farmers have ploughed firebreaks, and burnt the grass inside, and yet the coal has been carried over these breaks. Flakes of coal are carried a distance of two or three chains when a strong wind is blowing; and Collie coal remains alight for a considerably longer time than Newcastle coal does. I am pleased the member for York has brought this matter up. It is only right that the country should demand that the matter should be settled at once. One member has asserted that we might have had twenty or thirty thousand pounds worth of property destroyed; but I say that already twenty or thirty thousand pounds worth of property has been burnt this year, and that amount would have run into two hundred or three hundred thousand pounds if the fire had occurred in the district east of the railway line.

THE PREMIER (Hon. H. Daglish): No one can help regretting the disastrous fire of which we have the particulars

before us; but at the same time I am not aware that evidence has established the fact that the fire arose as a result of a spark from a railway engine.

MR. BURGESS: What more proof do you want?

THE PREMIER: I am speaking, of course, of the information at present in my possession. I am aware that sometimes we may be unduly hasty in arriving at conclusions in regard to the cause of a fire when there is no direct evidence obtainable. In regard to the question of the use of Collie coal, I may say there have been endeavours made right through to take every precaution that fires should not be caused by sparks flying from engines. When the question of amending the Bush Fires Act, with a view of safeguarding the land lying along the railway line, was brought forward, the Government hastened to secure the passage of that desirable amendment through Parliament; and immediately the Bill had passed, in fact before the Bill passed, the Minister for Railways drew the attention of the Commissioner to the fact that this amendment was before Parliament, and he said, "An amendment of the Bush Fires Act will probably go through Parliament this week. This will allow the Government to extend the proclamation issued under the present Act for any period not exceeding six weeks. I assured the House we will start operations at once, and that every precaution will be taken by the Railway Department in burning off; also that men expert in the work would be placed in charge of it. Will you please have everything in readiness to proceed; also let me know when any burning off is required, so that the necessary declaration can be made. This is an urgent matter, and I feel sure you will take all steps necessary under the circumstances, so that no grounds for complaint can be brought against us." That was on the 17th November last; and since that time there have been communications, both written and oral, between the Minister and the Commissioner, in which the Minister has repeatedly impressed upon the Commissioner the necessity for taking adequate precautions for preventing fires from the use of this coal. I have here a report from the Commissioner, dated the

14th of the present month, which runs as follows:—

From reports received from over the lines I am satisfied that all reasonable precautions are being taken and that the burning off is progressing as quickly as possible. Full instructions have been given, and evidence is to hand that they are being attended to. As to coal, we are increasing the proportion of Newcastle coal, and the spark-arresters are being well supervised so as to be kept in repair. We cannot well use all Newcastle coal until the Collie question is settled.

The reply is in reference to a question raised by the Minister in regard to the coal used on that railway.

MR. FOULKES: Was any reply sent by the Minister to the Commissioner?

THE PREMIER: There is no reply on the file. The minute is one bearing date 14th inst. I find that in November last year instructions were issued to locomotive officers that where spark-arresters were not likely to be suitable for preventing the emission of sparks from soft coal, New South Wales hard coal must be used. These instructions remain in force. I understand likewise it is reported by the department that every reasonable precaution has been taken to prevent or at all events minimise the emission of sparks. In regard to the heavy trains, gangers have instructions to follow up so as to cope with any fire that may arise on the line itself.

MR. BURGESS: It is a farce.

THE PREMIER: Inquiries in regard to this fire are already proceeding by the department, and if it be proved, as the member for Gascoyne has stated, that the fire originated from Collie coal I would have no hesitation, in fact would think it my duty, to at once instruct the department to cease the use of Collie coal during the summer months.

MR. BURGESS: I suppose we will be burnt out while that is coming.

MR. BUTCHER: What evidence do you want? I should think you had enough.

THE PREMIER: The only evidence which at present has been brought under my notice is a paragraph in one of the newspapers.

MR. GREGORY: The Minister will know something, I suppose.

THE PREMIER: I am of course aware that engines using all sorts of coal emit sparks.

DE. ELLIS: Not that class of spark.

THE PREMIER: The difference is that a spark from Collie coal will carry farther than a spark from Newcastle coal. I wish members to bear in mind that we cannot assume that every fire that starts close to the railway line necessarily starts from the use of coal by an engine which has passed over the line.

MR. BURGESS: People see it.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member may have seen it. I was not aware that anyone had seen it.

MR. BURGESS: The engine-driver acknowledged it. He said he would not swear to it.

THE PREMIER: Of course the hon. member has this information. I have not had it up to this moment. I can assure members the Government are prepared to entirely prevent the danger so far as it arises from Collie coal, by preventing the use of this coal in the agricultural areas where the danger of fire arises.

MEMBERS: At once?

THE PREMIER: I am prepared to issue instructions at once that this shall be done, because I recognise the danger that might arise, and I have every desire to safeguard the interests of agriculturists. No one can feel more sympathy than I feel for those who have suffered by this disastrous fire. I am sure the hon. member for York has no desire to reflect against this Government.

MR. BURGESS: No; one member of it.

THE PREMIER: In regard to the occurrence of this fire I do not think the member intended to reflect on the Minister for Railways.

MR. BURGESS: Yes.

THE PREMIER: I wish, regarding the Minister for Railways, to point out that while this fire has unfortunately been more disastrous than many fires which have occurred in the past, the Minister for Railways is no more worthy of blame than others who have held that position.

DR. ELLIS: If he made the promise, he is.

THE PREMIER: The Minister for Railways will speak for himself with regard to that matter. I have no knowledge of any promise having been made in this respect. I am speaking entirely on my own knowledge, and the hon. member will surely allow me to make a

statement based not on anything I have heard, but on the knowledge I possess. I conclude, sincerely regretting the occasion which has given rise to the present motion.

MR. C. H. RASON (Guildford): I trust it is unnecessary for me to say that I approach this motion in no party spirit; but no one could have listened to members who have spoken, no one could have read the paragraph we have seen in the papers recently, without recognising that these fires in the Eastern District not only call for our sympathy towards those who have suffered from them, but call for some immediate action to be taken to prevent a recurrence of these fires in the future. What appeals to me is this. It is not so much a question after all of the individual loss, bad though that may be, but the loss to the State both directly and indirectly; indirectly because the State cannot afford to lose the produce which otherwise would have come on its markets; directly, because if the damage can be traced to the railways of this State, the State is liable to be sued for compensation. What appeals to me even more than that is the effect it will have upon the agricultural industry, and upon the farther settlement of the soil. We can imagine what may be the feelings of the struggling farmer who, after having ploughed, harrowed, and sowed the ground, is just about to reap his harvest or has just reaped it, and is looking forward to the little profit he has been able to make from his hard work, perhaps for years, and then suddenly has this taken away from him, through no fault of his own, at one fell swoop. Is it likely that the frequent occurrence of things of this sort will tend to encourage settlement of the soil? There is one point I wish to make in regard to this motion. I am not actuated by party spirit, but I just wish to put plainly before the House the condition in regard to the recent fires, as it appears to me. It appears from what the Premier has told us that the Minister has been communicating with the Commissioner upon the subject of burning off. But we are told by the member for York, and that has been confirmed by the members for Northam and Gascoyne, that they obtained from the Minister, not from the Commissioner, a distinct promise that

Collie coal should not be used in the agricultural districts whilst the harvest was on the ground. Two of those members sit on the other side of the House, but that makes no difference as to their trustworthiness. I accept their statement. I know those members would not have made it unless it was absolutely true. Admitting that, the position is at once clear. Have any steps been taken to give effect to that promise? If there be blame, let us put it on the right shoulders. The Commissioner is blamed because he advocated the use of Collie coal. From what I saw in the morning papers he said he could not discard the use of Collie coal until he received instructions to do so. The point is this, then: was a promise made by the Minister that the use of Collie coal should be stopped? On that point I submit there can be no doubt: the statement of the three members I have referred to is sufficient. Then, was anything done to give effect to that promise? Was the Commissioner instructed not to use Collie coal on those lines? It is evident that the position is one which demands special and immediate inquiry, so that if there be blame attached to anyone, that person, whoever he may be, may take the responsibility. I hope there will be no question in regard to this motion, that every member of the House will agree with the member for York. There can be no doubt on the matter. I am sure every member of the House is in entire sympathy with those who have suffered so keenly. By some means the fire was caused, and to us it seems as if it had been caused by sparks from an engine on the railway. The member for York spoke warmly upon this subject; he spoke with sincerity of feeling. He had a great deal of feeling, not for his own loss, because he told us fortunately he could afford—

MR. BURGESS: I cannot afford it, but I can afford it better than others.

MR. RASON: The hon. member can afford it a great deal better than others who have suffered. He was not speaking on his own account, but he was speaking with great sincerity, because he felt so keenly—as did other members of the House—with those who have suffered so severely through this fire. I hope there will be no voice raised against the motion, and that immediate inquiry will be made.

I trust the Minister will tell us frankly what the position is with regard to the matter; whether he did attempt to carry out the promise given, and if he did not I trust he will express his sorrow for not having done so.

MR. J. C. G. FOULKES (Claremont): It gives me pleasure to testify to the attitude the Premier has adopted with regard to one particular part of this debate. Over and over again questions were put to him to tempt him to admit that Collie coal was used. I notice as a lawyer that he was careful not to admit that Collie coal was used. In my opinion he adopted the right course; because we all know that legal proceedings have commenced, if not yesterday, this afternoon; hence an admission by the Premier that Collie coal had been used would mean that the Government must pay heavy damages. The onus of proof lies on the people who have suffered damage. But from inquiries made, and particularly from the careful inquiries of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher), who for the last few weeks has been persistently investigating the matter, there can be no doubt whatever that Collie coal was used on the engines. The result is that the country will have to pay heavy damages. The member for York has spoken eloquently about the loss and damage which the settlers have sustained. To my mind it is not the settlers who will sustain the loss. They may suffer inconvenience. The loss must be borne by the people of the country, who will have to pay for it. Some years ago, in a Railways Bill I think in 1895, a clause was inserted that no person should bring an action against the Government for damages exceeding £2,000 in respect of a fire caused by engine sparks. I was then a member of the Legislative Council, where the clause was thrown out, because it was anticipated even then that the use of Collie coal would result in greater damage to the individual than £2,000 would cover. During the last few weeks agricultural members have, irrespective of party, united to impress on the Minister for Railways the serious risk in using this coal. The Premier has read a minute in which the Minister stated that he understood the position and realised the danger. I have no doubt he did realise the danger; but according to the

other minutes read by the Premier, a minute was subsequently addressed to the Commissioner of Railways asking him practically not to use Collie coal, to which the Commissioner replied in effect: "Until the question of the use of Collie coal has been finally settled, I purpose continuing using it." I should like the Minister to inform the House why, after receiving that minute from the Commissioner, he sat down without taking notice of it. It seems extraordinary that he did not give the Commissioner direct instructions to abstain from using Collie coal. We have had no explanation from the Minister; but I hope we shall have one when he speaks. The Railway Amendment Act 1902, in which the control of the railways is personally vested in the Commissioner, does expressly exempt from his control the purchase of stores, plant, rolling-stock and material. It is his duty to apply in writing to the Minister when it is necessary to purchase such articles. For all purchases he must have approval. I believe the practice is for the Commissioner to requisition the Stores Department, and for the Stores Department to send the requisition to the Government, who, if they think fit, ratify the recommendation. The decision of the Government is final. It is for them to decide what rolling-stock, plant, and stores are to be purchased; hence it seems to me there is not a shadow of doubt that the responsibility for the purchase of these requirements is not vested in the Commissioner, but in the Government of the day.

MR. MORAN: Is there not an annual coal contract?

MR. FOULKES: I dare say; but the Act explicitly states that the Government can decide on the kind of coal to be used by locomotives. Though a 12-months contract may have been entered into for the purchase of Collie coal, the Government can issue instructions that no Collie coal shall be purchased during the ensuing year. I hope that the Minister will, when he speaks, address himself to that aspect of the case; for it is an important aspect. We have the Premier's assurance that he will to-day give instructions that Collie coal is to be no longer used during harvest time. We all appreciate that promise, and we can only regret that such peremptory instructions—and I hope

they will be peremptory—were not given weeks ago. Of course, as one member said, it is easy to be wise after the event. I am told by the member for Gascoyne that last year the Government of the day did give such instructions, and that consequently no fires broke out. We can quite understand that the Premier has not much knowledge of the matter, and can judge of it only by what he is told. Still, though I am glad he has issued those instructions, I want to know why this Collie coal was used; and I hope the Premier will agree to the appointment of a committee to inquire into the whole case. We shall then not only find out who is responsible, but shall ascertain what precautions should be taken for the future.

MR. E. P. HENSHAW (Collie): I am sure every member has the fullest sympathy with those whose property suffered damage from the fire. It is most regrettable to see farms which have taken years to establish ruined in one fell swoop. But I should like to rebutt the inference that the fire has been caused by Collie coal. I am prepared to admit that this coal has a greater sparking tendency than Newcastle coal; but I have seen the engines sparking in districts where no Collie coal is used. I have seen them sparking before the Collie coalfields were open, when fires were just as prevalent as they are now. From the statement of a swagman who said that at 10 o'clock in the morning, when the sun was shining, he saw sparks falling from an engine, it has been inferred that Collie coal caused that fire. That is in keeping with the rest of the evidence. I have seen Newcastle coal sparking very freely.

MR. BURGESS: But the sparks do not fall so far away from the line.

MR. HENSHAW: It is strange that in Victoria, where none but Newcastle coal is used, the fires are just as prevalent. Along the Great Southern railway, where Collie coal, unfortunately, is not used, fires rage from one end of the season to the other. I admit that the Premier's assurance is fair; and I believe that during those months when crops are maturing, every possible precaution should be taken to prevent the spread of fires. If necessary, two or three chains on each side of the line should be cleared.

We must safeguard settlers. But I do not like to see Collie coal made a scapegoat in respect of these many charges. I am prepared to admit at all times that Collie coal is not as good as Newcastle coal; but because the former coal is somewhat inferior, it should not be made a stalking-horse. The member for York stated that although the department, at considerable trouble, made firebreaks, the fires crossed them. This would have occurred no matter how the fire originated. I should like to see full inquiry made into the origin of these fires; and I hope a conclusion will speedily be arrived at. If the fire has originated from this coal, which I doubt, the sufferers should be treated in a liberal fashion, and should be compensated to the fullest possible extent; but until there is definite evidence that the fire was caused by Collie coal, I am not going to accept the statement of prejudiced persons that it was caused by Collie coal. I have spoken to drivers, who tell me that the Collie coal has been in use for the last five or six years along these lines, and that its use has never been discontinued.

MEMBER: Nonsense!

MR. HENSHAW: There are men in this Chamber who can bear that out.

MR. RASON: Continually in use?

MR. HENSHAW: Yes.

MR. RASON: That is wrong.

MR. HENSHAW: I am prepared to allow those members who made this statement to me to back it up themselves. In reference to the statement that Collie coal is a dying industry, I do not accept it at all. The matter has been referred to a Royal Commission, which has full power to inquire into every aspect of this industry, and I am prepared to accept its decisions. I am prepared to see the coal stand on its merits. It can do so. It is a valuable fuel, one that has practically kept our railways going for the last three or four years.

MR. WATTS: Nine months of a year.

MR. HENSHAW: Yes, and more.

MR. WATTS: That is all we want.

MR. HENSHAW: The Premier says immediate inquiries will be made into the origin of these fires. I admit the sparking tendency of Collie coal is greater than Newcastle, but the sparks have less

life and are less dangerous. I am prepared to countenance the proposal of the Premier pending a strict inquiry. I am prepared to leave the destiny of the Collie coal industry in the hands of the Commission which will make impartial inquiries; and whatever its determination may be, the Ministry and all members will be prepared to accept it.

[HON. M. H. JACOBY took the Chair.]

MR. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): No one but must regret very deeply the disaster that has befallen some of the settlers in the York district.

MR. BURGESS: And Beverley district.

MR. FRANK WILSON: These settlers have our sympathy, inasmuch as they have been overtaken by a disaster which has caused serious loss to them; but I deprecate the rash statements and conclusions which are come to by those who have suffered that injury, and by members who represent them.

MR. WATTS: How do you know they are rash?

MR. FRANK WILSON: I can prove it.

MR. WATTS: You cannot.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Have a little patience. According to the Press report, we find that a charge has immediately been made, as has been made on previous occasions when fires have occurred, that the fire is due to the use of Collie coal on locomotives. That charge is based upon the statement of a swagman, who says he saw sparks fly from the locomotive; and so the crops were consumed. I am referring to the Press report. I do not know whether it is true or not. I believe some portion of it is untrue. Three or four years ago on an occasion of this sort in the same district a big fire occurred and very serious injury took place in consequence; and when a member brought the matter up in the Assembly the Collie coal had to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the fire; but in a week or two it was proved that the fire had not originated in close proximity to the railway, and that a man who had been camping had allowed his fire to get out of control some distance away from the railway. We have the coal industry, which is an important one to the State, and upon which a great number of people depend for their liveli-

hood; yet immediately the slightest damage to another and greater industry occurs, whether it has been caused by the use of Collie coal or not, as in the instance I have quoted, people fly to this House to have the use of the coal prohibited.

MR. BURGESS: Nonsense!

MR. FRANK WILSON: Did any bush fires occur in the York district before Collie coal was heard of?

MR. BURGESS: Yes. One occurred last year through lightning.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Does the hon. member say that if we stop the use of Collie coal on the railways we will not have fires in the districts? The hon. member would not be so foolish. Will the hon. member assert that there are no bush fires in other States? In New South Wales, for instance, where Newcastle coal is used, we hear of them every season just as in Western Australia. It is peculiar to our dry climate and to the natural conditions of our country. But I am not here for one moment to state that we should not inquire into the cause of this fire. Let us do so by all means; but I protest as strongly as I am able against the unjust conclusions jumped to in connection with these disasters. Let me take a reported interview with the Commissioner of Railways. Here we have a gentleman at the head of our biggest State industrial department. He is supposed to take an impartial view of all these matters. When the member for York, amongst others, said that the Collie coal caused this disaster, the Commissioner is reported to have said, "I would not use it if I had my way, but I am compelled to use it by the Ministry." I saw Mr. George this morning, and he emphatically denies that he ever made such a remark to these members. My reply to Mr. George was, "It is there in print. The sooner you correct it the better. Will you make it your business to correct the report to-morrow morning? As it stands now the people believe, according to you, and you are an authority on the question, that the fire was caused through the use of Collie coal, and that you acknowledge it, and that if you had your way you would not use an ounce of it."

MR. BURGESS: That was before the fire.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Mr. George may have said so. The hon. member may be correct in saying that the Commissioner made the remark prior to the fire.

MR. BURGESS: The fire had not occurred when the statement was made.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Fires had occurred. The statements are reported in this morning's papers as a result of an interview which the hon. member had with the Commissioner on Tuesday.

MR. WATTS: In connection with other fires, but not in connection with this fire.

MR. FRANK WILSON: It was in connection with a fire that did damage to certain crops growing somewhere in the district of the member for York.

MR. BURGESS: Not in my district.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Do not split straws. The hon. member saw the Commissioner in connection with damage through fires, and the Commissioner was reported to have said that he would not use the local fuel if he had his way. In reply to the hon. member's charge that these fires were caused by the use of Collie coal, I may say there is no proof that an ounce of Collie coal was on the tender of that engine, or, if there was any, whether there was any quantity of it. We know that a large quantity of Newcastle coal is used on these express trains. There is no proof that the fire would not have originated just the same if it was mixed coal, or if there was no Collie coal there at all. If the member for York admits—

MR. BURGESS: I am not admitting anything.

MR. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member is going to put in a claim against the Government, and he knows he will have a stronger claim if he can prove that the local fuel caused the fires.

MR. BURGESS: The Government are never honest enough to pay me anything.

MR. FRANK WILSON: At any rate hon. members will admit that we had fires caused by sparks, when nothing but the Newcastle coal was used on our engines. Fires originate from the use of any coal. There may be degrees of danger under different fuels. We know that sparks from firewood will carry farther than sparks from Collie coal; and we know that sparks from Collie coal, being of a lighter nature, will carry

farther, but not very much farther, than the heavier coal of New South Wales.

MR. BOLTON: They die out much sooner.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Exactly. We know that the sparks from firewood will be consumed quicker as they pass through the atmosphere. Whichever way one looks at the question it is only a matter of degree as to the danger which emanates from the use of any of these fuels. Before we enter into any hasty resolutions with regard to prohibiting this fuel or that fuel on the railways, we should wait and have a calm and clear inquiry into the whole question. Let us find out first whether there was any Collie coal on the tender of the engine, and secondly what proportion of that coal was used; and let us follow out the report that the fire started by a spark seen by a swagman. That swagman may be perfectly honest. He may have just left his camp fire after it got out of hand, which often happens, and when it was spreading through the country and a train happened along which suited his purpose and became a very good excuse.

MR. BURGESS: Other people were there on this occasion.

MR. FRANK WILSON: All I claim is, nothing has been proved yet against the use of the local fuel that will warrant this Assembly or any Government in prohibiting the use of that coal. I should like to say in this connection that when an inquiry is being made, returns should be compiled showing what claims have been made for fires proved to be caused by the use of the local fuel. I think members will be astounded at the smallness of the amount. I do not take it that members think that all the fires in the country have been caused by local fuel. Fires have always occurred in Western Australia; and if we were to close down the coal district to-morrow there would still be bushfires and crops destroyed, as there were previous to the use of that fuel.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND LABOUR (Hon. J. B. Holman): I, with other members, regret to hear of the conflagration which occurred in the Eastern Districts, and we all feel for those who have suffered by this serious disaster. The first time the question was brought before me was on the 10th

November, 1904, when a deputation, consisting of Mr. Harper, Mr. Butcher, and Mr. Quinlan, waited on me as to an amendment of the Bush Fires Act. I promised to take immediate action, and the result was that the Bush Fires Bill was passed through the Chamber in a very few days, and it became law. On the same day that I met the deputation I sent for the Commissioner of Railways, and had a conversation with him. The question of the use of Collie coal has been brought into this debate, and members who have spoken have said that I made a distinct promise that I would not use Collie coal on the railways. I do not remember having made a definite promise in that connection. The matter of the use of Collie coal was referred to by the deputation. I do not know if members have read the report of that deputation, but I will read it for the information of those present:—

Mr. Harper stated that the question was one of very serious import to the whole of the agricultural industry in the Eastern Districts. In consequence of the late rains, it had been impossible for the railway linesmen to burn off the grass along the line, and this constituted a very serious danger to all those residing in the vicinity. What the deputation desired was that the Minister should make some endeavour to meet this extraordinary situation by amending the Act, and thus enable the railway servants to do what should have been done some time ago. The constituents of the members of the deputations recognised the great danger and how much they would suffer. Even beyond that question was the other phase—the class of coal burnt and the burning of wood and Collie coal—and burning off between the railway fences would not secure the settler. We would like to know whether the Minister could arrange to follow the practice adopted last year by the Commissioner of Railways.

Mr. Butcher said that even now little patches along the line had been set alight by the use of Collie coal. The grass was not thoroughly dry yet and not quite ready for burning off, and he thought it would be wise for the Government to make some attempt to alter the Act and allow the burning off to take place, while there was no danger of burning the outside country.

Mr. Quinlan: There was only one solution of the trouble, and that was by the amendment. There was also the question of Collie coal being used during that particular period—he was sorry to have to say, it but the fact remained that the danger was very much greater on account of the bush fires caused.

Mr. Butcher stated that there was one point mentioned by Mr. Harper which he would like

to add to—the burning off of the railway line would not overcome the difficulty, because the sparks would set a light to the country three chains away.

Mr. Harper : The ash pan of the engine was the danger now.

The Minister recognised the danger, and that it required some steps to prevent, and thought a short Act to amend the Bush Fires Act that would exempt the Commissioner from the clauses of the Act could be brought in. Did the deputation think that would meet the case?

Mr. Harper thought it would want a lot of hedging, because the linesmen were not too careful as to what time they burnt off. It should not be done without the knowledge of the people residing near the line, so that the fullest precautions possible could be taken.

The Minister thought that would be due precaution to protect the people in the vicinity.

Mr. Harper : The Bill would want hedging a little more than to say “burning at any time.”

The Minister : As regards the use of Collie coal, could they let him know the districts which were considered dangerous?

Mr. Harper : The whole way from Clackline to Mt. Barker, and eastward to Cunderdin or Tammin ; in the South-West there was not so much danger, but he would not like to say much about it, because there was country that did not burn freely, and there were not the steep grades on the line. It would be wise to consult the people along the line there.

The Minister : In connection with that matter, he would consult the Commissioner to see whether anything could be done.

Mr. Harper : To be safe, the drivers must start out from Fremantle with Newcastle coal during the special time of the year. After the 1st March, the grass could be burnt back—about four months; yet. It ought to start at once, say from the 15th of the present month.

The Minister : The shorter the amendment was made, the better, and thus get it through as early as possible.

Mr. Harper : The matter of Collie coal would be administrative.

The Minister : They all recognised the danger that was said to exist from Collie coal, and they were very sorry to see that their coal was not equal to Newcastle. It was hardly wise to cause danger to a big section of the people when by a little expense it could be overcome.

Mr. Harper : It has been regarded in common law that the Commissioner was not liable for the damage done.

The Minister : There would have to be a saving clause that notice should be given to people residing in the vicinity, and they would have to watch their holdings. There would not be much time this year, as it would take about a fortnight to go through.

Mr. Quinlan : It was that urgent that if there was a big fire great damage would be

done to poor people, and it would cost the country a considerable sum of money.

Mr. Harper : If it were limited to the 15th November there should not be much excuse for its being carried out.

The Minister believed it would be better to exempt the railways from the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Harper : But then they might be negligent. This year they could not do it on account of the late season. The coal question could be left and discussed in the House. The amendment was to give the Commissioner an extension of time.

The Minister would go right about it at once, and see what could be done to bring it down that evening.

I fail to see, during the whole of the discussion, that I made any definite promise that the Government would discontinue the use of Collie coal in the agricultural districts. That was on the 10th November. I may say that immediately the deputation left me, I arranged to see the Commissioner of Railways, and placed the matter before him; and in giving his reasons why an amendment to the Bush Fires Act is necessary, he says :—

Referring to our conversation of this morning, I beg to say :—With regard to the Bush Fires Act, the most simple way of dealing with the question would be that a short amending Bill should be passed by the House, exempting the Railway Department from the operation of the Bush Fires Act. The Railway Department should be empowered and obliged to clear off, by burning, all inflammable matter between the fences. It should also follow the present practice of making a firebreak immediately within the fences. It should also be a matter of obligation that at least three days before starting burning a notification of such intention should be given by the Railway Department to all owners or occupiers of property adjacent to the line, and whose property might be endangered by the burning off. Landowners adjacent to the line should be required to plough a firebreak within their land of not less than six feet wide, at a distance of not less than one chain from the railway fence. This, to my mind, would cover the question, and would be a great factor in minimising the danger from fire to the landowner. The department recognises thoroughly that any loss to the landowner of growing crops by fire is a most serious matter to him and also to the department; as on the prosperity and well-doing of the landowner the freight and consequent profit of the department would continue as far as possible the practice of using Newcastle coal exclusively in such agricultural districts as are affected during the months of the year when danger from sparks may arise. With regard to the proposed break in the landowner's property,

this was suggested by me two years ago, but apparently was misunderstood by the farmers. I therefore give you the following reasons why it should be done:—It is usual for the farmer to plough a break within his fence, generally a few feet from same. The object of ploughing a six-foot break a chain from the fence is that in case of sparks, a fire that might otherwise originate beyond the farmer's present break would be stopped by the break a chain off the fence. Of course, there would be no need for a break near to the fence if this suggestion were adopted. It will be said that away goes the crop between the fence and the break; but I submit that the risk of losing the whole crop is very much minimised, as it is not likely that sparks would carry to a distance of a chain beyond the fence line. Then the following year, six feet could be ploughed on the near side of the farmer's break, and on the following year on the off side. The fallowing of the six feet would thus result in giving a better crop on the following year. With regard to the proposition that a date might be fixed when burning should stop, I wish to point out that this is very difficult indeed to arrive at. For example, on the Northern Railway, right up to Nannine, if any burning has to be done, it could be done very much earlier in the year than on other railways. The Great Southern railway, Albany to Katanning, and a considerable portion of the South-Western railway, are what might be termed wet districts, and it is only very late in the season that burning operations can be carried on. On the Eastern railway and on the Great Southern as far as Beverley, burning could be done and should be done very much earlier. So you will see that to fix an arbitrary date for the whole of the railways is scarcely possible. Then again, according to the season, so would the date be affected, as with a wet season like the present one the date fixed for the usual season would be unsuitable.

That only goes to show that the promise I gave to the deputation was carried out. I immediately spoke to the Commissioner, in accordance with my promise to the deputation, and placed before him the whole matter, giving him a report of the deputation. The minute of the Commissioner of Railways was that the department should continue as far as possible the use of Newcastle coal in such agricultural districts and in such months of the year when danger from sparks arise. The member for Northam placed the matter before me on one occasion. The first conversation I had with that member was on the 20th November, when he rang up my office and asked if we were still using Collie coal on the trains in agricultural districts. I informed him, as I informed the members of the deputation, that in-

structions had been given that as far as possible Newcastle coal was to be used where any danger was known to exist from the use of Collie coal. After the member for Northam rang me up, I sent a farther minute to the Commissioner of Railways as follows:—

In the memo. of 6/11/01 referred to, the Commissioner of Railways instructed the Acting General Manager that "From the present time to the end of March next, no Collie coal shall be used on the lines running through the agricultural districts." On the 13/11/01, the late Chief Mechanical Engineer pointed out to the Acting General Manager the difficulties which would arise; and after having seen the hon. Commissioner on the matter—when he explained that hard coal was being used solely where the engines were fitted with straight funnels, and that on engines fitted with soft-coal funnels 20 per cent. of hard coal was being used. Mr. Rotherham again reported on the question to the Acting Manager (G.M. 1342, C.M.E. 00/580, 4/12/01). As a result the Acting General Manager advised on 19/12/01 that "matters are to remain as they are at present."

I have a reply from the Chief Mechanical Engineer to the Commissioner of Railways dated 21st November. It says:—

On receipt of your memo of 14th November last (W.R. 03/827), instructions were issued to officers in charge of Loco. Departments that where there was any likelihood of spark arrester appliances not being suitable for preventing the emission of sparks from soft coal, New South Wales hard coal must be used (C.M.E. 03/6395). These instructions have not been cancelled, and any neglect to carry them out is being severely dealt with.

That was the instruction issued on the 14th November last, and that instruction has not been cancelled. I fail to see where any blame lies on my shoulders in not carrying out the promise I made to the deputation. I took every possible step in my power to protect the farmers, who I recognised were in serious danger from bush fires. I believe I have spoken to every member of the deputation since, and asked them what steps were being taken in their districts to burn off, and whether every protection was taken. They informed me that burning was going on steadily, and that so far as they had seen, every precaution was being taken. I leave it to members of that deputation who are present to say whether that is so. On the question of the use of Collie coal on our railways, I may say that one of the first steps the present Government took was to see that Collie coal should

get a chance of proving whether it is dangerous or not, and with that end in view a Commission is sitting on the question at the present time.

MR. BURGESS: We are burning while they are sitting.

THE MINISTER: It may be as the hon. member says, they are burning while the Commission is sitting. It is well-known that more bush fires have occurred in Western Australia during the last month, in parts where not an ounce of Collie coal was used, than have occurred before. We remember the fire that occurred up North on Mr. S. Phillips's property, and the fire that occurred on Mrs. Dempster's property at Grass Valley, where Collie coal was not used. I fail to see any evidence that has been produced in this House to-day to prove that Collie coal is the cause of the present fire. If members of this House will come forward and say that a certain danger exists and that they are positive of it, I think the Premier is only acting right in saying that any possible danger arising in the future from this cause shall be avoided as far as possible.

MR. FOULKES: What made you tell the deputation that you realised the danger of using Collie coal, and that its use should be stopped on the railway?

THE MINISTER: I listened to those members of the deputation, and said I would do everything possible to see that any danger from this source should be minimised. Other members have referred to the question whether the swagman saw this fire start. [Interjection by Mr. BURGESS.] The hon. member knows that the fire on Mrs. Dempster's property at Grass Valley was not caused by Collie coal.

MR. BURGESS: I never referred to that.

THE MINISTER: I only mentioned that to show that fires have occurred, and that they did not arise from Collie coal. In some districts the first thing people do, if they can attribute the fire to some particular cause, they do so. We have all heard the outcry against Collie coal, and I am sorry that Collie coal is not so good as Newcastle coal.

MR. BURGESS: We all admit that.

THE MINISTER: We all admit that.

MR. BURGESS: Then I am sorry you use it.

THE MINISTER: I have shown this House that immediately the deputation waited on me, I did everything in my power that they asked me to do.

MR. BURGESS: I asked you after you saw the deputation—and I mention this now to give the Minister a chance to reply—why you did not carry out what you promised when I asked you myself this day week as to whether they were burning Collie coal on the railway.

THE MINISTER: Every time the hon. member spoke to me about the use of Collie coal, I informed him that every possible step was being taken to prevent the use of Collie coal where it was known to be dangerous, in the agricultural districts.

MR. FOULKES: Did you issue instructions to the Railway Commissioner not to use Collie coal?

THE MINISTER: I have read to the House the instructions that were issued.

MR. FOULKES: When the Commissioner sent that last minute, that he proposed to use a certain amount of Collie coal, why did you refrain from giving peremptory instructions that it was not to be used in any quantity, however small?

THE MINISTER: I have yet to have it proved that Collie coal has been used on the railways or has caused these fires. I must again express my sincere regret that the fire has occurred in the York district, and I hope we shall not have any more fires in the future. The Government are blamed. One of the greatest causes of blame is for the use of Collie coal on the railways in that district. During the end of last year no burning off was done, and this year there has been a heavy growth of grass, and the danger is greater than it was before. Special bodies of men have been told off along the railway lines to watch the passenger trains, and to do everything possible for preventing or checking fires. Instructions have also been given to them that if any fire is noticed by them at all, whether near the railway or at a distance from it, they are to leave their work and do all they can to help in putting out that fire. I do not think anything farther can be done by the Railway Department at present. If any fires are caused in the Eastern Districts in the future, members

may rest assured that they will not be from the use of Collie coal.

MR. H. BROWN (Perth): We have heard the Minister stating that the Government were desirous of trying the merits of Collie coal. I do not travel frequently over the railway, but whenever I have been on the railway or near it, wherever I have been I have noticed, as other members who travel more than I do must have done, that Collie coal is thrown off the tenders all along the line. [MEMBERS: Where is that?] On any part of the railway. We are quite aware that the Government are trying to bolster up this industry; and I would ask the present Ministry whether they have given the owners of Collie coal another 6d. per ton on condition that the 6d. goes to the workers?

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is a little out of order. We are not referring to the Collie coal, but entirely to the question of bush fires.

MR. H. BROWN: The Government say they are trying the Collie coal. I ask, have they not given 6d. per ton extra, and demanded practically that the 6d. per ton shall go to the men?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member's remarks have no reference to the subject introduced by the member for York.

MR. HENSHAW: Is it not possible to get a withdrawal of that unfair inference that the men obtain the extra 6d. per ton?

MR. SPEAKER: It is not an imputation against any member of Parliament.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member accused the Government of having given the Collie coal-owners 6d. a ton extra on condition that the money was given to the men. I give that statement a positive denial, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

MR. SPEAKER: The statement being denied, will have to be withdrawn.

MR. H. BROWN: I will withdraw it; but I was told the other day that a letter was in existence to that effect.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw the statement unreservedly and unqualifiedly.

MR. BROWN: I will withdraw it unreservedly.

RESUMED.

DR. ELLIS (Coolgardie): I have listened to the discussion with a good deal of interest, because I think a serious wrong has been done, and a wrong that should have been avoided. I have listened to the correspondence read by the Minister, and am satisfied that he at least was not to blame for this accident which has occurred. But it appears to me that the Railway Commissioner is very much to blame, if in this case Collie coal was used at all. The Commissioner wrote to the Minister, stating that Newcastle coal was being used exclusively in the agricultural districts. If he wrote a statement to that effect, and it is clearly proved that Collie coal has been used there, then the whole blame and the liability for loss of life will lie on the Commissioner's shoulders. We have the statement of the Minister that he wrote to the Commissioner of Railways, instructing him that Collie coal should not be used on the railways in the agricultural districts.

MR. RASON: What is the date of that? It must be three years ago; and if so, that relieves the Minister of 1904.

DR. ELLIS: It is not the Minister who is to blame—it is the Commissioner of Railways; and if it was shown to me that the Commissioner used Collie coal in that district, and the fire resulted from it, the Commissioner should be tried for manslaughter if any death occurred from the fire. In this case it was not far from being a case of manslaughter. The position is very serious. If the railways were run by a private company and the Government were not involved, how much sympathy would there be for people who are practically to blame for what has happened? Persons who, for the sake of lucre, risk the lives and property of the people, knowing that the report of the railway officers was that it was dangerous to use Collie coal, have used it. I contend that if the Commissioner did allow Collie coal to be used in a place that was dangerous, is it not time to get rid of him? I consider that when any man deliberately and knowingly does something which involves the department under his control in a loss of £20,000 or £30,000, it is time to decide whether that man is fit for his position. He admitted, in his own minute read by the Minister, that

he knew Collie coal to be dangerous, and that it should not be used in agricultural districts.

MR. BURGESS: The Commissioner does not want to use it.

DR. ELLIS: I am quoting his official minute, not what he said to the Press.

MR. BURGESS: Read the reports.

DR. ELLIS: His minute reads, "He would use Newcastle coal exclusively in the agricultural districts." I am given to understand that on this engine Newcastle coal was not used exclusively.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The words were, "used as far as possible."

DR. ELLIS: I think you will find the word "exclusively." I wrote it down as you read it—"use Newcastle coal exclusively." It could not be used "exclusively as far as possible." I wish to make some farther observations about fires caused by Collie coal. I suppose members know that I have recently been a frequent railway traveller, and have travelled every week through this very district, by an early train passing through Northam; and I have often wondered that the district has not been set on fire. In years gone by, when no care whatever was taken, I have seen as many as four or five fires lit simultaneously by railway-engine sparks. On the high grades between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, over which I used to travel frequently at night, I have seen fires lit by sparks all along the track. That was two years ago. Men living in camps near the railway always burnt off the grass round the camps so that it might not be set alight. In one case on the fields there was every reason to believe that a man lost his life through being burnt in his camp, to which an engine spark set fire. I am given to understand that Collie coal has been used almost exclusively during the last three or four years. Watch the sparks that fall from Collie coal. They are half an-inch and three-quarters of an-inch long. [MEMBERS: Oh!] I can assure hon. members that I have never seen engine sparks like those from our engines, save from engines burning wood. Sometimes, in Ceylon, I have seen wood-burning engines sending out showers of sparks like those emitted by Collie coal; but in New South Wales, though fires are sometimes caused, I have never seen anything like the showers of fireworks

which Collie coal produces on the up grades. If there is any risk of fires, and I have it on the authority of Mr. Rotherham that there is great risk, it appears to me that persons responsible for using Collie coal in districts where life and property are in danger should be held liable in any court of law; and I contend it is the duty of the Government, if these fires are proved to have been caused by locomotives, to pay compensation without going into court, provided the claims are reasonable. [MEMBER: Tax the Collie people.] They are taxing us to the tune of £100,000 a year. I waited with great interest to hear the member for Sussex (Mr. Frank Wilson) explain why the fire could not have been caused by Collie coal. First he said that the preceding fires did not break out near the railway line; but this fire under discussion did break out alongside the railway line, as members now in this House can testify. More than one person saw it when it started; and there is no reasonable doubt that it was lighted by an engine spark. If that engine is shown to have used Collie coal, an inquiry should be held into the whole subject, to decide whether the Commissioner of Railways should be discharged.

MR. T. F. QUINLAN (Toodyay): I regret that I missed a portion of this debate. My principal reason for rising is to make a statement in reference to the deputation which waited on the Minister. He is quite correct in saying that he never made any definite promise to the deputation; but he led me to believe that he intended to take some prompt action to prevent the use of Collie coal. It was urged on him that its use should be suspended during a portion of the year, and I regret that our predictions have proved only too true; for we anticipated a heavy loss to settlers adjoining the line.

THE MINISTER: You will remember that I asked you whether the discontinuance of its use at a certain season, as in previous years, would be sufficient, and you answered, "Yes." The same precautions have been taken this year. Its use would be discontinued this year as in previous years. That was my promise.

MR. QUINLAN: I may have stated that I was satisfied with that, but I have no recollection of so doing. I admit that

no definite promise was given that the use of the coal should be discontinued; but we were satisfied that the Minister would take prompt steps in the matter, and we naturally concluded that the use of the coal would be suspended. Three or four years ago I saw grass set alight by Collie coal. Fortunately that season was too early for any great damage to be done. I saw a similar incident at York on one occasion, near the show grounds; and it has been proved beyond doubt by other speakers that Collie coal is at a certain season dangerous to crops. It will be very regrettable if we have to condemn what we hope will be a great industry; but the fact remains that we shall have to prohibit the use of Collie coal during the hot summer months. When on the deputation to the Minister I said I anticipated claims against the Government; and I hope the Government will come to the rescue of those farmers who have suffered by the recent fire, and will make good their loss. Particularly when it can be proved by an onlooker that the Collie coal was the cause of the fire, the Government should, without waiting for legal proceedings, pay any reasonable claim. I approve of the member for York's suggestion that an inquiry should at once be held to ascertain who is to blame. It is a pity that the Minister did not, instead of using the words "as far as possible," direct the Commissioner that the use of Collie coal must be discontinued at this season of the year. The present and past Governments alike knew the risk attending the use of that coal in summer; and I do not think this Government is more to blame than its predecessors. But now that the facts are so forcibly brought home to Ministers, I hope they will profit by their experience, and that more care will in future be exercised.

MR. BURGESS (in reply as mover) : The Minister has not replied to the most definite statement I made—that I went to him on last Tuesday week, and that he told me he was not burning the coal. He has never denied that statement; and I am sorry he is unable to deny it. Another matter. His minute to the Commissioner reads "as far as possible." If he was in earnest, why did he not give direct instructions there and then to discontinue the use of the coal?

In my opening speech I did not refer to the deputation; but its representations should have been enough to show the Minister that the matter was serious; and he ought then to have issued instructions. He is responsible to Parliament and to the country. He alone is condemned before Parliament and before the country. It is very well to throw the blame on the Commissioner; but that is useless. The Commissioner's minute stated that he would not discontinue the use of the coal until the question was settled; but that he did not believe in using it. My opinion is that the Commissioner is not at all answerable. It is very easy to condemn a man who has not an opportunity of defending himself here. I know that the Commissioner is not answerable. The Minister's speech was very indefinite. There may not be a legal mind in the Government; but they have a good method of evading difficult points in controversy. The principal reason for their not stopping the use of Collie coal is a very good reason—because Dr. Jack is experimenting with the coal, and the Government do not want to condemn the coal while the inquiry is proceeding. I know from responsible officers that the engine-drivers do not want to use this coal, knowing very well its disadvantages. The Premier and the Minister for Railways asked who saw the fires started by sparks. Of course the statements of agricultural members are always doubted. We are treated as nobodies. The member for Sussex said that only a swagman went along. We will prove that there was more than a swagman.

MR. FRANK WILSON : I said that the newspapers said so.

MR. BURGESS : I am not referring to the newspapers. Let me point out to members the trouble we take over these matters. I and my son have a large farm, and we have our men three miles out watching for fires. We keep a trap and horses to carry food already cooked to the men two and three times a day so that they can watch for the fires. With all that trouble we have to put up with the damage from the Collie coal which is used to benefit a few labourers in another part of the State. I have no wish to stop any industry, and the Collie coal industry may yet be one of the greatest

industries in this State; still this coal should not be burnt during certain seasons of the year. It is all very well for members to preach sympathy, but that is not what is wanted. The Premier and the Minister for Railways have acknowledged that Collie coal is used. That is good enough for any court: it may possibly enable some poor men to get something from the Government. The member for Collie has acknowledged that Collie coal is not good, and that the sparks fly about. I say that this coal explodes. Scores of times people have watched Collie coal in use on the engines and have seen the sparks fly about. But our statements are denied. I did not come into Parliament to make lying and untruthful statements. There is truth in the statements I have made. It is derogatory to say I came here to make statements so as to get something out of the Government. We have heard the statement read which was supposed to have been written by the Commissioner of Railways. I think the Commissioner must have got a boy to write that statement for him, for it was absurd. In these days of farming how is a man going to cultivate six feet of land one year and six feet the next year. Such a statement read out to sensible men is childish. I have carried this matter far enough, and I hope something will come of it, for I have seen men in despair who have lost their all. I know good hard-working men who have been on farms since they were 14, and who to-day are ruined. I came down in the train this morning with a struggling man, and he told me what had happened yesterday. My son and others did what they could to break the fire from his yards and his homestead. Then they went a little farther to save his crop, and when they came back his sheds were on fire, and he lost every bit of harness. That man had to go to Northam to buy fresh harness to-day. It is no use saying the fire has not been caused by Collie coal. I know it has. We have seen the sparks coming out of the engines and flying all over the place.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Do you know that there was an ounce of Collie coal on the tender?

MR. BURGESS: The member for Sussex should not be so childish. The

member for Collie has said that large showers of sparks come out of engines. I only want the State not to use Collie coal during certain seasons of the year. If the Government want to use Collie coal at all times, let them resume the land alongside the railway line. When the railway was first built through the district referred to, where farmers had crops growing, the Government took one chain of land, but where there were no crops they took two chains. The Government should have taken three chains all along. It is real misery to live alongside this line, and the sooner the Government take steps to resume the land the better. I would sooner give the Government the land to-morrow. Let them take the land and clear it every year. We are willing to meet the Government. It would be better to give the land away in the first instance than have these serious annoyances and danger for ever. I could move a vote of censure on this matter; at any rate I could bring the two sides together, and we should know where we are. I am not afraid to stand by myself. I can point to a case in which I did stand alone in the Upper House when a swindle was being worked in the city of Perth, and a sum of £250,000 was passed through both Houses. We have an immigration scheme spoken of, but what is the use of bringing people here if they cannot with satisfaction settle on the land? We must consider this matter seriously. In view of the fact of the news of the fire being telegraphed all through the other States, what will people say? That Collie coal is burning the people out after people have been put on the land. People will not forget this. I am sorry the Minister has not been able to answer the charges which I have made. The Minister has not even replied to my statement; he could not do so. I give the Minister credit for not denying my statements, but his answer was not satisfactory. I have no desire to carry this question further: we have already taken a couple of hours over it. I have brought forward this matter with an honesty of purpose. The member for West Perth is always sneering and discourteous.

MR. MORAN (in explanation): I cannot understand the hon. member. I am in entire sympathy with him; and when I interjected, I said the proper thing to

do was to get a promise from the Premier that Collie coal should not be used, and that assistance should be given to the settlers. If the hon. member were not so much like a bush fire, he would do more good.

MR. BURGESS: I said that the hon. member was often discourteous, and he knows he has been. I am acting honestly in bringing this matter forward. We ought to have had a vote of censure on the Government over this question; but I am bringing the matter up on my own initiative. I do not desire to take a vote on the question: the public will be able to judge. I trust the use of Collie coal will be stopped at once. When the wind is gusty, farmers living along the railway lines are in dread of fires. Last year I lost pretty well as much by a lightning storm as I have lost this year. I hope now that these sufferers will be paid without having to go to law; at any rate it will only be a matter of justice to these poor men. Beyond all doubt it is the Collie coal which has done this. The hon. member for Sussex (Mr. Frank Wilson) says, "That will do." It is all very well to say "that will do," because they are not burning Collie coal down in his district; but it does not do to say that we will be burnt out. The member for Gascoyne wants this stopped at once. Everything people have will be burnt out, and it is no satisfaction to men who come here to spend money. I beg leave to withdraw the motion.

IN EXPLANATION.

MR. F. CONNOR (Kimberley): The member for York referred to two members here.

MR. SPEAKER: I do not think he referred to the member for Kimberley.

MR. CONNOR: It is understood that the reference was to me. I would like to make this explanation, because otherwise I may be placed in an absolutely false position. I have never missed an opportunity at any time since this question came before the House to condemn the use of Collie coal on the railways. If members will look at *Hansard* they will find that is so.

MR. BURGESS: The hon. member has no right to speak.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. member has no right to accuse me as he did.

MR. BURGESS: I referred to the hon. member's not objecting to the statement I made about Edmund Burke, the great orator.

MR. CONNOR: I beg the hon. member's pardon. I accept the explanation.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

PRIVILEGE—MR. GREGORY'S COMPLAINT AGAINST MR. MORAN.

MR. H. GREGORY (Menzies): I desire to draw attention to a statement made in the Press this morning with regard to myself. In matters of this sort we have noticed, even when reading reports of police court cases, that there is generally some little sense of refinement amongst reporters, and that they try to give to the public a reasonable statement of what occurs there. Apparently reporters here seem to go a little beyond, and if they think there is anything that will appeal to the public palate, no matter how discreditable, it usually gets into the public Press. When there are long debates and possibly recriminations, things may be said which those who say them regret almost immediately afterwards, and they would prefer, I take it, that these things did not appear in the Press. But certain statements appear to have been made by the member for West Perth (Mr. Moran) which I did not catch, and I am going to ask that I receive from that hon. member an absolute apology for those remarks, if those statements are correctly reported in the *West Australian*.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member can speak on a matter of privilege, but he cannot ask at this stage for an apology on a point of order. The hon. member may refer to the circumstances, as a matter of privilege only.

MR. GREGORY: It is as a question of privilege I desire to do so.

MR. MORAN: Had you not better see whether I am responsible for those remarks or not? Had you not better proceed in a more leisurely way? Do not use any threats. That is all I ask.

MR. GREGORY: Those remarks are in print, and have gone out before the people. I would like to say, if I am right in speaking on a question of privilege, that yesterday morning a

certain statement was made by the Minister for Works in regard to one of my old colleagues. We were all, I think, very excited—

MR. MORAN: You yourself especially.

MR. NEEDHAM: We were not all excited.

MR. GREGORY: I, anyway, was considerably excited, because the character of one of my late colleagues was impugned, and in the most honourable way the Minister for Works withdrew the statement he had made. But while I was remarking on that occasion how I would risk my reputation with that of my late colleague, there was, according to the statement appearing in the Press and which I have here, a remark by Mr. Moran, "That comes well from you. You are the last man in this or any other Parliament who should talk like that. You have always been a Parliamentary pimp." That is not the sort of thing I am going to stand. I want to say this, that for all the years I have been in Parliament, and the work I have done, I have never either directly or indirectly received one threepenny bit from any soul other than the salary given to me as a member of Parliament, or as a Minister. To have an accusation made like this—from whom? Is it from one who can turn round and talk to others of a clean reputation? He talks about my skin-deep honesty—

MR. MORAN: I said it was not skin-deep, I think.

MR. SPEAKER: I do not propose to allow any interjections in this matter just now. The hon. member will have an opportunity of replying later, and I hope he will not take the opportunity of replying by interjections. A member can rise to a point of order on anything he objects to.

MR. MORAN: I hope you will grant me that privilege. I am not likely to offend.

MR. GREGORY: According to the paper Mr. Moran said, "I said the hon. member's honesty was skin-deep. I'll say it is not, if he likes." That is the sort of withdrawal we received on that occasion, and I then stated, "I am not discussing my own reputation." "I should think not," interjected the hon. member; "I have come across your slimy tracks in many places." I asked the Chairman then to

insist upon a withdrawal of that, and Mr. Moran said, "Very well; I'll withdraw the statement. He does not make slimy tracks; he travels shod." I asked the hon. member to withdraw the whole of his statements and to apologise. I do not think there should be so much of this Billingsgate.

MR. MORAN: Did I refuse?

MR. GREGORY: I asked the hon. member to-day if he would apologise.

MR. MORAN: I think I told you I had done so.

MR. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member had better take notice of my previous remarks about interjections.

MR. GREGORY: I asked the hon. member would he, when the House met, make an unreserved apology? I have a character to lose. With regard to my work, I have tried to be clean. I think it is wrong that some low, contemptible scoundrel can damage the character of a man—

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not address those remarks to the member for West Perth.

MR. GREGORY: I beg pardon. I withdraw that. I feel it is very difficult to resist using strong language. Here it has gone back to the people that I leave a slimy track behind me.

MR. MORAN: I think the House cannot be conducted with more dignity, by your making those statements. [Mr. Moran here left the Chamber, but subsequently returned.]

MR. GREGORY: I think we have had lately a great deal of a species of larrikinism.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member can only proceed to make an explanation regarding the attack made upon him. If the hon. member attempts to make any attack upon another hon. member, I shall have to stop the discussion.

MR. GREGORY: I simply want to get an opportunity of refuting those statements. I am sure every member who reads this paper will admit at once that it is not fair to make remarks of this sort in regard to any person's character. If anyone desires to make a charge, let it be made. I am one of those always looking for a fight. I am only too pleased to have a fight in connection with any matter; but let it be something different from this. I regret this, and I think the

member for West Perth should make a retraction and an apology. I intend to point out that unless that apology is forthcoming it is my intention to ask that a Commission be appointed to inquire into certain matters, and I will give the member for West Perth an opportunity not of criticising the characters of other members, but of defending his own. Is it too late to give notice of motion?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

THE PREMIER (Hon. H. Daglish): On the question of privilege I wish to say, if I may be permitted to do so, that I regret I was out of the House at the time the remarks are alleged to have been made, as read by the member for Menzies; and if they were made I personally think it regrettable, as I think it is very regrettable indeed when any member of this House unfortunately uses language—

MR. MORAN: I expressed my regret in full. The hon. member ought to know it. His leader knows it, if he does not.

THE PREMIER: In my opinion it is regrettable when any language which reflects on any member is uttered in this Chamber. At the same time I presume that the Chairman or the Speaker, or whoever may be presiding, would naturally have his attention called to the matter, and would insist on that language being withdrawn. But I would like to go farther than that, and indicate that the way to prevent this sort of thing is not by standing up and repeating the same offence; and while the member for Menzies is in my opinion quite justified, if at any time he is unfairly alluded to, in demanding an apology as well as withdrawal, he at all events should set the example that he desires other members to follow, and should therefore, when calling upon another member to withdraw and apologise for an unfair remark, avoid uttering an unfair remark himself.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member withdrew that.

THE PREMIER: I wish to point out—

MR. SPEAKER: I insisted upon a withdrawal, and the remark having been withdrawn the hon. member cannot refer to it.

THE PREMIER: I was only going to suggest an apology.

MR. C. J. MORAN: On a point of order: if that be so, why does the hon. member refer to two interjections?

MR. GREGORY: They were not withdrawn.

MR. MORAN: They were withdrawn.

THE PREMIER: The point I wish particularly to raise is this: it would have been much better if the remarks had been made in the form of a request, unaccompanied by any threat.

MR. MORAN: That would have been granted at once. He knows that.

THE PREMIER: I think the desire of the member for West Perth would have been to make any reparation that the circumstances might render necessary. Every member of this House occasionally is liable to say words that afterwards he regrets, especially when the sittings of the House are somewhat unduly prolonged. I hope this matter will be ended by the member for West Perth merely repeating the withdrawal he has already made, and by the member for Menzies in the same fashion accepting it.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member might have been just enough to have told this Chamber the interjection he hurled across the floor at me—that was missed by the Press—which led to all this trouble.

MR. GREGORY: What interjection?

MR. MORAN: Which members of this Chamber heard. Those connected with me for the last ten years know I never start these recriminations. I hate them; they make me feel miserable. I resent my own action afterwards. The member for Menzies knows what he said to me that morning. I ask him now, does he remember what he said?

MR. GREGORY: What was it?

MR. MORAN: I ask his leader also, does he remember what he said about something being swallowed?

MR. RASON: As I have been appealed to—I wish the member for West Perth had not done so—I am bound to say that my recollection is that the commencement of these recriminations, which ought to be stopped, and must be regrettable indeed now they are brought to the minds of both parties, came from the member for West Perth by saying that the member for Menzies was unsexed.

MR. MORAN: No. I think the remark made was, "Remember your sex." It was made humourously, and I appeal to members who were in the Chamber to bear me out.

MR. RASON: There was something prior to that.

MR. MORAN: The leader of the Opposition must not think that I am going to stand here and be misrepresented.

MR. RASON: If that remark means anything, it means that I am misrepresenting the hon. member. I object to that. The member for West Perth appealed to me. I have given my version honestly and truthfully. The first remark came from the member for West Perth.

MR. MORAN: What came from the member for Menzies?

MR. RASON: The member for West Perth said that the member for Menzies was not a man. There are many members who heard what passed.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: It is most regrettable that there should be any allusion to what passed yesterday. The member for Beverley being absent, as the oldest member of this House present I regret to have heard such language being used, and I regret the scenes which were carried on here yesterday morning and during the debate. The remarks reiterated to-day are made by old members of the House, and there are a great many younger members. Our great object should be to maintain the dignity of the House.

MR. MORAN: I am replying. I do not want a lecture from the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: I understood the hon. member had resumed his seat.

MR. MORAN: I sat down to give the leader of the Opposition an opportunity. I want to get the truth first, and will listen to the lecture patiently afterwards. My remark was made innocently, and without the slightest feeling of malice. No such meaning could be given to the remark, "Remember your sex." It is absurd for the leader of the Opposition to wilfully strain that meaning. The member for Menzies knows I did not mean anything of the sort. Will the member for Menzies withdraw the remark he uttered across the House?

MR. GREGORY: What was it?

MR. MORAN: Does not the hon. member remember what he said? If he does not withdraw, and if he does not remember the gross insult to me, I do not withdraw a word. If there is to be an apology, let it be on both sides. I got up after my remarks were made, and said—the member for Menzies was out of the Chamber—that I regretted very much what had been said. But the member for Menzies, who was not present, approached me to-day and threatened me.

MR. GREGORY: Not first.

MR. MORAN: Did I not tell the hon. member that my apology was published in the *Morning Herald*, and did not I refer to it? I think the member for Toodyay was in the Chair when I expressed my deep regret at having been led to make use of words I was sorry for. I always do that. Evidently the *West Australian* reporters did not catch the few words. They were not to blame. They had been there all night. It was no fault of theirs. It was at eight o'clock in the morning. I think I said to the hon. member, "If that remark slipped from me I will withdraw it, and publicly;" but the hon. member knows that he threatened me then. I think it was unfair. If I am threatened, I put my foot down and stand still. I will not be threatened by anybody. I hope I am always man enough to resent any man in this House threatening me with any dire consequences. That is all I said. The hon. member threatened me with certain consequences, and I told him to go ahead.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: It was not my intention to read a lecture; but in maintaining the dignity of the House, as an old member I feel it is unfortunate that even on this question of privilege members should repeat recriminations of a previous occasion. Notwithstanding there may be exciting moments in the House, I feel there is room for much improvement in regard to the way in which retorts and recriminations are made. An example should be set by older members of this House in this direction. There may be good reasons for this discussion, but if the withdrawal is made it should be accepted in the spirit in which it is given. The member for Menzies is within his rights in drawing attention to this matter in the circumstances, because the

words do not appear as having been withdrawn; but we should get on with the business of the country without resorting to recriminations which irritate without expediting business. We are in a way degenerating to a common debating society by the interjections of members. Every effort is made by Mr. Speaker to keep members in order, and latitude is given; but these proceedings are not a good example to the younger members coming to the House, when for many years it is said that the dignity of the West Australian Parliament has always been maintained by the members who took part in its deliberations.

MR. RASON: As my name has been dragged forth in this discussion I may be allowed two or three remarks. I know no man who is more sorry after he finds he has done something to hurt anybody's feelings than the member for West Perth; but unfortunately he is very impetuous. Even to-day in discussing this question, the hon. member has accused me of exaggerating, after appealing to me to state what happened.

MR. MORAN: I repeat, you have done so intentionally or otherwise.

MR. RASON: Is not the conduct of the hon. member I have previously commented upon then, as now, enough to wound the feelings of anyone? I had no wish to be dragged into this on one side or the other. Appealed to, I gave my version. The member for West Perth says he has expressed regret. When I was addressing the House on a charge made against a previous colleague of mine, I expressed regret that many of us were too apt in the heat of debate to say things that afterwards I am sure all of us are very sorry for, that not only the man who heard the remark was hurt but that probably the man who made the remark was still more hurt when he realised that he had said something he would much rather have left unsaid. Following on my remarks, the member for West Perth certainly did say he was led into making utterances that very often he regretted.

MR. MORAN: Why did not the member for Menzies hear of it?

MR. RASON: The member for West Perth in his impetuosity—

MR. MORAN: Oh, rubbish!

MR. RASON: There is another example of the hon. member's conduct!

MR. MORAN: Yes; we know.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MORAN: Don't start lecturing.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. RASON: I submit that at all times the member for West Perth adopts a bullying attitude.

MR. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member had better withdraw that.

MR. RASON: Well, a brow-beating attitude.

MR. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member should bring no farther accusations into this matter.

MR. RASON: I wish to say no more, except to express regret that some members are only too apt to say things that hurt and rankle in the minds of those who hear them, long after they have been uttered.

RECONCILIATION.

At a later stage of the sitting, explanations were made as follow:—

MR. H. GREGORY: In rising on this occasion, it was not to speak on the Railway Estimates, but to claim the indulgence of the House for expressing his regret at a little episode that occurred this afternoon. Entering the Chamber this afternoon, he felt in a mood that was not particularly amiable. He was reported in the Press as having made certain statements. In speaking on that occasion, he now realised that he went a little too far, and made statements which he felt sorry for. The member for West Perth (Mr. Moran) and he had been associated together in political work for over eight years. They had always been particularly good friends, and it was possible that in these long sittings there might have been a certain amount of acrimonious debate at times. The hon. member (Mr. Moran) was not justified in certain statements he made, and he (Mr. Gregory) was not justified in the statement he made this afternoon. This being Christmas time, he had no desire to go away with a feeling of ill-will towards any member of the House or anyone outside it. Therefore he wished to withdraw the statement he had made this afternoon.

MR. C. J. MORAN: It had given him great pleasure to find that a little differ-

ence which had occurred between himself and the hon. member was now removed, and had reached this happy termination. The little misunderstanding which had occurred he believed had wounded deeply, particularly the wife of the hon. member; and that being the case he hoped that what was now passing in the Chamber would come to her ears, that he (Mr. Moran) in the fullest sense withdrew every remark of an objectionable kind he had made in reference to the member for Menzies, and to state that the whole matter arose out of a misunderstanding. At 8 o'clock this morning, after sitting up all night, he was reported to have said a particular thing of which he had no recollection; and he wanted to repeat the assertion that there was no justification for having made use of the words he did. He withdrew the whole thing, and now wished to express the most kindly sentiments towards the hon. member, and to say that these little things did not conduce to the happiness of the man who made the statement, and still less of the man against whom the statement was made. He hoped it would be reported that the whole matter was ended. Both had been in fault, and if he (Mr. Moran) was the originator of it, he overstepped the bounds of fairplay; and he now extended the hand of friendship to his old friend, hoping that the matter would be speedily forgotten. He did not desire to wound any man's feelings; and knowing that he had sometimes spoken with fiery heat, he was prone to thrust more than he intended to do. He withdrew handsomely any objectionable words he had said in regard to the hon. member.

The incident then terminated.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Report of the Governors of the High School to 30th June, 1904.

By the PREMIER: Proclamation declaring Quarantine Station for vines, near Hamel. Proclamation declaring Quarantine Station for stock, near Fremantle and Owen's Anchorage. By-laws made for the management of Monger's Lake Reserve. Regulations made under "The Land Act, 1898."

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: By-laws of Bayswater Roads Board. Papers

ordered on motion by Mr. Gordon relating to the transfer of the South Perth bore to the Acclimatisation Committee.

QUESTIONS—GOLD BUYERS' LICENCES, BOULDER.

MR. GORDON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is it true that he has granted to M. Mazzuchilli, and refused to H. McKay, a gold buyer's license for Boulder? 2, Did not the Warden in such instance recommend the granting of the license? 3, Was not the evidence given in regard to the character of McKay of a most satisfactory nature? 4, Is not Mazzuchilli the only licensed gold buyer other than banking corporations licensed to purchase gold at Boulder? 5, As Mazzuchilli and McKay are both working jewellers, did not the Minister consider that by granting one application and refusing the other he was creating a monopoly which was not justified?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes; a license was granted to M. Mazzuchilli, and McKay's application, with a number of others, was refused. 2, Yes. 3, Yes; the evidence was satisfactory. 4, There are three gold buyers, in addition to the banks, in the district. 5, No evidence whatever had been adduced that the facilities already existing in the district for the sale of gold are not ample for the convenience of the mining public, and this will continue the chief consideration in dealing with future applications. All licenses expire on December 31st.

QUESTIONS (2)—GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING.

MR. A. J. WILSON asked the Premier: 1, What space was secured for Government advertisements in the "Great North-West" publication? 2, What was the price paid? 3, Was there any agreement to purchase any copies of the work? 4, If so, what were the number and price? 5, When was the contract entered into?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Two pages. 2, £105. 3 and 4, No; but 750 copies were supplied free. 5, 28th October, 1904.

MR. A. J. WILSON farther asked the Premier: 1, What space was secured for Government advertisements in the Christ-

mas number of the *Western Mail*? 2, What was the price paid for the same?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Half-a-page. 2, £15.

QUESTION—INEBRIATES RETREAT,
TO ESTABLISH.

MR. A. J. WILSON asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been called to the recurring frequency with which some people are charged in the Police Courts with habitual drunkenness, and repeatedly committed to prison for the offence? 2, Does he not think that in such cases drunkenness is more of a disease than a crime? 3, Will he consider the advisability of establishing an inebriates retreat, where such people may be detained for special medical treatment in lieu of commitment to prison?

THE PREMIER replied: Inquiry will be made respecting the desirability of establishing an inebriates retreat.

QUESTION (3)—RAILWAY CROSSINGS,
EAST PERTH.

MR. RASON (for Mr. Hardwick) asked the Minister for Railways: What is the intention of the Government in regard to a subway or bridge in the open crossing known as Fenian's Crossing, East Perth?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: This matter has been brought under notice by the member for North Perth, who has been informed that, when funds permit, it is the intention of the Railway Department to arrange for the construction of a subway at this place.

MR. GORDON (for Mr. Hardwick) farther asked the Minister for Railways: What is the intention of the Government in regard to a subway or bridge in the open crossing known as Sommers Street, East Perth?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: I have not previously had this matter brought under notice, but inquiry will be made.

MR. GORDON (for Mr. Hardwick) farther asked the Minister for Works: Does the Government intend to construct the long-promised bridge over the railway line at Caversham Street, East Perth?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: The Government prepared a

design for the bridge; but as the City Council would not undertake its maintenance (even though in the first instance the whole cost of construction was to have been defrayed by the Government), the work was not proceeded with.

QUESTION—HAMEL EXPERIMENTAL
FARM.

MR. A. J. WILSON asked the Premier: 1, What number of hours per week do the men work on the Hamel State Farm? 2, What wages do they receive? 3, Are the Government prepared to adopt a 48-hours week in connection with all work on these experimental farms?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Nominally nine hours; but the permanent men have to work longer if occasion requires. 2, Manager, £250 per annum; ploughman, £2 per week and free house; dayman, 7s per day. 3, I am obtaining a report on its practicability.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1904-5.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from the previous day.

RAILWAYS DEPARTMENT (Hon. J. B. Holman, Minister).

GENERAL STATEMENT.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND LABOUR, in explaining the Estimates for Railways and Tramways (£1,286,509), said: I intend to show the reason why a higher amount is provided for Railways and Tramways in the present financial year than was actually expended last year. Members will see that on last year's Estimates the estimated expenditure was £1,299,870; the actual expenditure in that year being £1,228,235, or a saving of £71,635 on the estimated total. For this year, the proposed expenditure is £1,286,509, being a reduction as compared with last year's estimates of £13,361, and an increase on last year's actual expenditure of £58,274. If we go farther back and look at the Estimates for 1902-3, the amount of expenditure estimated was £1,323,166, and the amount actually spent was £1,275,564. Hon. members, in looking at these figures, will see that the estimated expenditure for this year compares very favourably with that of last year, in spite of the fact that

the railways are extending in mileage and growing in traffic year by year. In all probability, members will be desirous of knowing how the increases in the estimates of this year are brought about, and the reasons for them. Looking at the figures, we see an increased expenditure amounting to £58,274 above last year's estimate. On items 1 to 50, there is an increase of £14,559; on item 53 there is an increase of £376, which is brought about by requiring extra travelling, lodging, and goldfields allowances. On item 55 there is a small increase, which is required to allow a little extra wages on the Roebourne tramway. On item 56 there is an increase on the actual expenditure of £30,059, for materials required for re-sleeping and re-ballasting the permanent way. On item 57 there is a small increase in incidentals as compared with the actual expenditure last year. Also on item 58 (compensation for losses, detention, or damage to goods, and for personal injuries), the amount of the estimate is the same as was voted last year, £8,000; but after the Mokine and Poison Gully accidents, this amount has practically vanished already. On items 51 and 52, wages and temporary clerical assistance, there is a decrease of £3,502 as compared with last year's actual expenditure; and on item 60, vacuum brake fittings, there is a decrease of £1,000, which is balanced by an increase of the same amount on item 61 for completing the train piping of trucks, carried over from last year. Item 62 shows an increase of £6,544 for replacing obsolete rolling-stock, and is a set-off against depreciation. I may say generally that the increases in this year's estimate of expenditure make a total of £58,274. Members will notice that the total amount of expenditure proposed for this year is £1,286,509, which by comparison shows a saving of £13,361 on last year's estimate, and is an estimated increase of £58,274 on the actual expenditure of last year. Referring now to the revenue, the estimated earnings for this year have been carefully arrived at, based on the trade offering and the likely developments in the working of the railway system, together with the taking over of the Malcolm-Laverton railways; and the total is estimated at £10,000 more than was received last year. Mem-

bers may ask why the estimated earnings will not be more in proportion to the increased expenditure, seeing that we are going ahead in many directions; but I may point out that considering we estimate to receive £60,000 less for freight in connection with the carrying of contractors' plants, etcetera, and making allowance for reduction of freights in the new rate-book on such articles as mining machinery, members will see that due provision has been made in arriving at the total of estimated revenue. I may mention here that although last year's estimate of revenue was £1,631,500, the actual receipts last year did not reach that amount by £20,000. I will endeavour now to explain the various increases in the estimated expenditure for this year. Taking items 1 to 50, relating to salaries, there is a total increase of £18,744. In that amount we have this year transferred from the loan to the revenue department items for salaries amounting to £2,240. There have been certain members of the staff transferred from the wages to the salaried staff, amounting to £4,906; also the new appointments, to secure better results and to meet the growing service, amount of £5,730. Then the classification increases for cadets up to £100 per annum, also advances on salaries in deserving cases, amount together to £5,868, or a total increase of £18,744. The increases in the staff receiving salaries under £200 a year amount to something over £4,000. The total increases in the salaried staff, payable to those receiving over £200 a year, amount to about £1,200. So, though there are a few increases, the amount in money is not great; and in every case where increases have been given, those increases do not, even at the present time, bring the amount received by those officers up to anything near what is received for the same work in the Eastern States. The increases in wages since 1892 have been fairly considerable; and it is a great pleasure to know that we are able to increase our wages in the railway service to a certain extent. Though at present a great number of railway employees are not receiving the same rate of pay as they are entitled to, yet we hope that, as the country goes ahead, we shall be in a position to give them as high a rate of

wages as they are entitled to. On item 51 (wages for traffic, locomotive workshops, ways, works, and stores), the estimated expenditure in 1903-4 was £706,035, and the estimated amount for 1904-5 is £711,532, being an increase of £5,497. The actual expenditure in 1903-4 was £718,534, and the estimate for the current year being £711,532, there is an estimated decrease of £7,002. In this amount I include item 51, an increase of £5,497 for wages; also I include item 52, an increase of £3,500 for the payment of all the clerical assistance for traffic, locomotive, workshops, ways, works, stores, etcetera. We have not been able to get a net record of work done in the past, and it is desirable to keep a record to show what work has been done, and what it costs to perform that work. The actual expenditure last year amounted to £718,534, which shows an increase of £12,499 on the amount provided in the Estimates. The increases in wages since 1902 have been considerable. An expenditure of £2,500 for increases in the traffic branch is now under consideration; and there are increases in other branches. Merit has been considered in every case. The actual increases for the year ending 30th June were as follow: Traffic, £4,045 7s. 6d.; ways and works, £304 15s. 6d.; loco., £3,098 11s. 6d.; stores, £78 12s.—a total of £7,527 6s. 6d. The first industrial agreement with the traffic branch necessitated an increase of £8,000. An increased overtime rate was paid, and the eight-hours day given to employees whose duties were at all continuous. This increased expenditure goes on from year to year. Wages are higher to-day than they were two years ago; and I hope they will be higher two years hence than they are now, and that the country will be in a position which will justify the increase. The amount in item 53 is for compensation, £8,000. Last year only £3,957 was required for this purpose; but this year the amount paid in compensation for accidents is, up to date, £2,100, and that amount does not include compensation in connection with the Poison Gully and Mokine accidents early in this financial year. It is anticipated that a considerable sum will be needed as compensation for these accidents, and that the amount of £8,000 will be required for this year, over and

above the expenditure for compensation last year. That accounts for a farther increase of £4,000 on last year's expenditure. For general improvements to stations, there is an increase. Last year a fair amount of nearly £25,000 was spent under this head. Items 60 and 61 will provide £14,000 for vacuum brake fittings to complete 750 freight trucks now fitted with train pipes only, and to complete train piping of trucks carried over from last year. This provision is absolutely necessary for safe working. In February of last year an accident happened at Lion Mill through a defective brake, and it cost the department £2,000. Had that train been fitted with a vacuum brake and train pipes, it could never have got away. In item 62, for replacing obsolete rolling-stock, locomotives, etc., there is an increase of £6,544. This item always appears on the Estimates; and it represents one twenty-fifth of the value of the locomotive rolling-stock on the 30th June, which fraction it is usual to set off against depreciation. This item will increase from year to year, as the value of the stock becomes greater. It is practically a sinking fund, to provide that our rolling-stock may be renewed for 25 years. The new railway opened in this financial year is the Malcolm-Laverton line, which, with sidings, has a length of about 55 miles. During the past few weeks industrial agreements have been made for three years with various associations: on the 26th October with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, on the 29th October with the Coastal Boilermakers' Union, and on the 2nd November with the Coastal Iron, Brass, and Metal Moulders' Union. Another agreement was completed on the 19th of this month with the West Australian Locomotive Drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Union; and I hope that in a short time agreements will be concluded with the whole of our railway employees, to insure industrial peace and satisfaction to both sides for the next three years. At the end of that period we shall see the benefit of these industrial agreements, every clause of which I hope will be satisfactorily observed by all parties; and we shall then, I trust, be only too pleased to enter into other agreements. Prior to the introduction of the Government Railways Act 1904,

the Commissioner sat as an appeal board. By the annual report of the department, members will see that a larger percentage of appeals was allowed by the Commissioner than is now allowed by the appeal board. Still, we must all admit that greater satisfaction must result from the board than from the Commissioner's deciding appeals. We are pleased to know that the work is in the hands of such a tribunal. It is useless for me to go into the detailed figures. The Railways Report has been on the table for the last six or seven weeks, and members have had ample opportunity for studying the whole of the figures. When the items are mentioned I shall endeavour to give every information to which members are justly entitled. It would be useless for me to say that I know everything to be known of our railway working. No man in the country who has been connected with our railways for so short a time as I would be in a position to say that. However, I have studied the department as thoroughly as I could; and I hope to be able to throw sufficient light on any question which members may raise. I commend the Railways and Tramways Estimates to the Committee.

[General discussion ensued.]

Mr. C. H. RASON said he appreciated the remarks just uttered by the Minister, who might rest assured that no one would ask any question which he could not fairly be expected to answer. There was no desire to harass him in any way. The only point to which it was now necessary to draw attention was that this year the estimated expenditure was £58,274 more than the estimate for last year; and yet the estimated revenue was only £9,992 more than last year's. That was an important point. If it was necessary to spend over £58,000 more on railway administration than was needed last year, surely we might expect that there would be a much larger traffic and much larger receipts. All things being equal, railway expenditure was largely governed by traffic. As a rule, if it was necessary to spend more money in railway working, there would be a correspondingly increased revenue. But in this instance, we were to spend over £58,000 more than we spent last year, in

order to earn only £10,000 more. That seemed to be bad business.

Dr. Ellis: Preferential freights were to be abolished.

Mr. RASON accepted that as an authoritative statement from the amateur Minister for Railways. Would the real Minister make the same statement?

Hon. F. H. PIESSE, having been absent from the Chamber, had heard only the latter portion of the Minister's remarks. It was unnecessary to speak at length, as much had been said of the railways when discussing other matters. The gratifying improvement in locomotive working was due to the late locomotive engineer, Mr. Rotheram, whose opinions were not duly appreciated when he gave them. Mr. Rotheram had done much to improve the condition of our rolling-stock. He came here with the highest credentials; yet his recommendations for economic working of rolling-stock and locomotives were under-valued by those responsible. Mr. Rotheram was condemned in various quarters, and condemned unfairly. It was recognised that he was doing good work, and the criticism levelled against him should have been refuted at the time. There were many improvements in locomotives which he effected. To-day locomotives were capable of hauling 30 to 40 per cent. more load than previously, with very small addition to the cost in proportion to the work they were able to perform. This was a great saving to the country. Many locomotives had been thrown out of work because there was not sufficient room to deal with repairs; but one cause of so many engines being laid aside was that the late Locomotive Engineer brought about an improved design in locomotives, which had been of immense service to the country. He effected a great alteration in the ordinary wagon stock. Instead of carrying loads of 5 tons to 10 tons, according to the character of the vehicle, the late Locomotive Engineer was able, by a little expenditure of money, to increase the carrying capacity of wagons from 5 tons to 10 tons and from 12 tons to 16 tons, and now the carrying capacity was still farther increased. Economy was effected in that direction. We could now carry on the same number of wheels a greater traffic than we had been able to deal with previously; consequently there was more

economical working. He mentioned this to show the good service which the late Locomotive Engineer rendered to the State. If we were to have good servants we should discourage criticism which was detrimental to the experience of a man. The public frequently condemned before an opportunity was given to a man to prove what he had recommended. A great deal of harm was done to a man in this way. The late Locomotive Engineer died in harness, at a time when the good results of his work were about to be accomplished, and now it was fitting to pay some respect to his memory. The Ways and Works Branch was interesting to those looking to the development of the country. It was to be hoped the provision made would be sufficient. He believed farther provision was made on the Loan Estimates for this branch, and he hoped the provision made in the Loan Bill would enable the Commissioner to carry out many additions and improvements in connection with various railways throughout the State, especially in agricultural districts. He understood recommendations were made for an increased expenditure in this direction, so that good work might be done. In the past the Commissioner had been hampered because of the limited amount of money placed at his disposal for carrying on works. With increased settlement in the country, there was a demand for farther conveniences. Wherever small improvements were fully justified, and could be carried out at a small cost, work such as improved loading conveniences, the construction of loading ramps and sidings, and lessening the distance, these should be done, and would be an incentive to the development of the land. He hoped the Minister during the earlier period of next year would see that the Commissioner was provided with sufficient funds to place in hand works which had been long delayed. The Minister had had an opportunity of seeing some of the difficult works which had been asked for, and was willing something should be done in the direction mentioned, for the Commissioner frequently made the excuse that he had not the funds. More money should be expended in this direction if good service was to be given to the country. He was glad to see that the vacuum brake fittings were being ex-

tended. That was carrying out a recommendation made many years ago, and he was pleased that vacuum brakes were being fitted throughout the system. The expenditure was fully justified, for if an accident occurred and compensation had to be paid—if there happened to be loss of life—the amount would be greatly in excess of the cost of farther vacuum brakes. It was necessary, having such an extensive system, that every safety should be extended to the public. It would enable the Commissioner and the traffic department to make use of rolling-stock to attach to mixed trains. So far as the question of brakes was concerned, he watched the matter with interest, because previously he had made strong recommendation in this direction, and he was pleased to note that great improvements were taking place in regard to what was termed mixed trains. On the whole, everything seemed to be going along satisfactorily. The department required a good deal of money to carry on the work of the country; but the expenditure would be fully justified if the work was accomplished. It was difficult to estimate the definite amount of expenditure and revenue. This was work of an anticipatory character, for the revenue had to be estimated, and the expenditure also. He understood there was some proposal to alter the rates; but he had not, so far, heard the lines on which it was intended to make the alteration. If the alteration was to be made by a reduction of so much per cent. on the present rates, the matter would require to be carefully looked into. There was the question of dealing with the differential rates, which had been raised by the member for Coolgardie. He (Hon. F. H. Piesse) had spoken of this before, when the member was not here, and now that member would have an opportunity of listening to what he desired to place before the Committee. If the question of differential rates was looked into, it would be found, after all, there was very little to complain of. He was prepared to agree with the member for Coolgardie, that the differential rates should be abolished or assimilated to the other rates. In regard to preferential rates, he did not think they would infringe on interstate rights. This was, after all, a question as between

different parts of the State; and provided we did not give undue preference to the local article as against the imported article from the Eastern States, he did not think we would be interfering with State rights. Preferential rates were granted all the world over; in Canada and America, and even in Australia, in New South Wales, the practice was followed. If we were to encourage the opening up of new country in distant places, we must place people not altogether on the same footing as those near to the centres of trade, but we could lessen the rates by way of comparison. It was the duty of the country to do this, provided it did not increase the price of the article to the consumer. We should carefully take into consideration the question of differential rates, which was frequently confused with preferential rates. The preferential rates question should be fully considered before any change was made. Unless something was done to assist people in distant places, we were not likely to see the country progress as we would wish. Not only should there be preference as to the products of a district, but in regard to the carriage of goods to the people. A man could travel from Northam and return home three times a day for 10s.; but to travel from his (Mr. Piessé's) district and return it cost 39s., as against 10s. from Northam. Consideration should be given to this. Galvanised iron was carried for 18s. a ton to Northam; the same article cost nearly £3 to be carried 225 miles.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. BOLTON: Undoubtedly the late Chief Mechanical Engineer had an enormous amount of experience. Still, he had to put up with a great deal of criticism which might possibly have hurt him, and perhaps he took too much notice of it. An officer in that position had to put up with a certain amount of criticism, and even by those who had no right to criticise. A good deal of that criticism was due to this Chamber. It was ordered that spark-arresters should be affixed where Collie coal was used. The putting on of those spark-arresters led to a good deal of adverse criticism.

One knew from views entertained by persons engaged under Mr. Rotheram that there was some amount of excuse for criticism. The spark-arresters stopped the sparks, but they also stopped everything else. There were other things which led to adverse criticism. Mr. Rotheram introduced a great many things which, to the man who had to work the locomotive, were decidedly detrimental both to the locomotive and to the man. A great deal was spent on what were termed fads. As to rolling-stock, a quantity of that which was discarded was capable of good service. That gentleman recommended a better class of locomotives, fitted, one admitted, with the best appliances. The latest to be introduced was the class "E" type, a very heavy locomotive; and the "F" class, a heavy goods engine, arrived by the same shipment. Sixty-six per cent. of the "E" class engines had to go into the shops for repairs through faulty make. It was under Mr. Rotheram's superintendence that the plans for these locomotives were drawn out. As to boiler repairs these engines had been an absolute failure. In relation to class "F" 112 per cent. were sent into the shop, the 112 per cent. being explained by the fact that some engines went twice to the shop in a year. The cost of the "E" class of engine was £5,180; which was almost double the price of any engine ever before imported to this State. The price of the "F" class was £5,998. The class of engine referred to was doing good work, but the cost of running these engines took some part of the cream from the work they were doing, because they were very heavy consumers of coal. The load had gradually increased, even with these engines, till now they were hauling the extremelimit. The only place where we had a tunnel was in the dangerous section from Swan View to Parkerville. It was high time that the Government deemed it necessary to have an air shaft in that tunnel. Serious accidents had happened there. In one case the driver and fireman lost consciousness, and the train ran back, and but for the provision of a runaway siding there would have been a serious smash; but as it happened, things went off fairly well. However, both the fireman and driver fainted from exhaustion in that tunnel. Sometimes

the water in use in locomotives was of a very bad nature, and when the engine was priming it was necessary to let off water from the cylinders by the release cocks. If that was done in the tunnel, one was debarred from getting any breath at all. It was usual for the drivers and firemen to go flat on their faces and also for them to put wet waste or their caps over their mouths. There were times when it was almost dangerous to go through the tunnel.

MR. BURGESS: How long did it take to go through?

MR. BOLTON: Seven or eight minutes. It was worse than being in a bush fire to be in that tunnel. The brickwork was not more than nine or ten inches from the tunnel. The expenditure for administration was on the increase. It had been explained by the Minister that some of the wages staff had been put on the salaried staff. The salaried staff last year cost £23,279, and this year £25,125. On the other hand, the wages staff last year cost £173,531 against £158,000 this year. The wages for the locomotive staff were on the decrease in the aggregate. In a recent arbitration case one could not forget the wail of the Commissioner, who said that if an agreement were entered into the railways would have to be run at a loss. It seemed that the loco. department was the scapegoat. The late Chief Mechanical Engineer (Mr. Rotherham) never forgot those who worked under him, and stuck up for his department. Notwithstanding that wages had decreased in the aggregate, we found that the men employed on the railways had increased from 6,200 last year to 6,747 this year; but the increases were all among the salaried officers. The Government could even make more from their revenue. It was proposed to adopt the system of pooling engines—the worst thing any railway could do. The man in charge of his own engine looked after it and kept it up to date and in repair; but when a man had to hand his engine over to a second man, the latter would not care so much about it, and having got to the end of the section he would hand it over to the next driver and be satisfied. That was pooling engines. The late Chief Mechanical Engineer had a system of putting each man in charge of his own

engine, and it was a credit to the driver who got a high place on the cost-sheet each month. Now, the department thought it would save by pooling the engines. If an engine ran for four sections, four drivers would be employed on it; so instead of running eight or nine hours and then being cleaned, the engine would run for a longer period and not be cleaned at these intervals. The department would save 7s. for a cleaner, but would spend 30s. on the wear and tear through not having the engine cleaned. It was a bad system not to have engines cleaned regularly, especially in Western Australia; and the Minister should take notice of the officers of the department if the Commissioner was adopting this system of pooling the engines against the advice of the officers. The barracks at Southern Cross were some of the finest in Western Australia, but after being built they were shut down, and new barracks were to be built at Meriden. The only argument advanced for the change was that there would be shorter hours for the drivers. These barracks derived a considerable revenue, sufficient to pay interest and sinking fund. The Government tried to show there was a saving of £4,000 by closing down these barracks at Southern Cross; but he (Mr. Bolton) did not believe the figures produced by the Minister. If gone into they would prove to be inflated. It was claimed that the services of three cleaners had been saved—a saving of 22s. 6d. per day; but these cleaners had been transferred, one to Midland Junction, one to Northam, and one to Fremantle; and it was called a saving. In regard to the water supply for the department, there was a good supply of water for engines on the goldfields; but the Minister should look into the supply at several other places. Water was carried from Picton to Bunbury, and had been conveyed for years past from the one place to the other; whereas by laying down a set of pipes considerable saving might have been effected. It was said the fall was not sufficient; but even without pumping, the tank at Picton could be made higher, so that a fall could be secured. The water service at Midland Junction was bad. Water had now to be conveyed by train from Chidlow's Well. At Midland the heaviest

work in the service was done, and there should be a good supply. It was peculiar the Mundaring supply had not been used; but lately the department was using a dam which had been standing idle for many years. The cost of taking water from Chidlow's Well to Midland Junction was enormous. Water was also conveyed from Perth to Fremantle, and this had been done for years past. It was time the department found it cheaper to introduce a water system at Fremantle. Water had to be conveyed from the Coolgardie water supply scheme at Northam to Beverley, and the wear and tear on the mixed train was very considerable, because the train must be driven faster since the stoppages could not be made easily, no vacuum brakes having been fixed on the water trucks. It was pleasing an industrial agreement had been entered into, and that it had been signed for three years; but it was to be hoped the Commissioner would see that the officers of the department carried out the provisions of the agreement. One did not altogether blame the Commissioner; but agreements were not carried out as they should be carried out, all through a quibble regarding interpretation. If the men were not satisfied with the way in which the Commissioner was carrying out the provisions of the agreement, it was a point which they could refer to the Minister. It was a matter of interpretation; and Mr. George, being shrewd at interpreting, could do it in his own way. Still it was a fine thing to have an agreement showing exactly the conditions under which men had to work. Another matter the Minister might not have heard of was in the Ways and Works branch, where some men had been working continuously for as many as seven years and yet were still classed on the temporary staff. They were paid off at the end of six months, and in that way were prevented from becoming permanent hands. The object apparently was to do away with the annual holidays that these men would otherwise be entitled to; yet they had been employed continuously, some of them for many years. Was it right that these men should be paid off for $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours at the end of each half year and be engaged again, just to defeat the Act in that particular? In the Railways Report the

Commissioner referred to the need for office accommodation for the Chief Mechanical Engineer's staff. Large offices had been built at the Midland Junction Workshops, and being now unused, why should not those offices be used for this purpose? Another little matter was that in the Storekeeper's branch there was an absurd practice of taking the stock annually; and when he informed members that the stock-taking each year extended over about nine months, and that most of the expenditure in this branch was actually for stock-taking, members would realise how absurd the process was. It would be more business-like to take the stock once in three years, or to spread the operation over three years, taking a portion each year. During the last two or three months of the year the clerks had to work after the usual hours.

THE MINISTER: That had already been altered.

MR. BOLTON understood that the practice of taking stock annually was to comply with the Audit Act; but that Act should be amended. It was not right that the Commissioner should be allowed to spend £30,000 in duplicating a line from point to point without the matter coming before Parliament. Existing lines had to be improved, of course; but the matter of duplication ought to come before this House. Another little matter which might be a surprise to some members was that in several towns along the railway two or three of the streets were under the control of the Commissioner, and he had to spend money to keep them in repair. It would be better to transfer the control of these streets to the local municipal body in each case. At North Fremantle the municipal body had plenty of funds, and was willing to take over these streets and keep them in repair, on condition that the Commissioner should put them in good repair before transferring them. The North Fremantle Council had a surplus of £833 at the end of last year, and was willing to undertake the cost of these streets.

MR. RASON: Then the council represented by the hon. member would not need a subsidy?

MR. BOLTON: The Commissioner had been asked by the North Fremantle Council to place a station at the north end of the municipality; but the Com-

missioner was not willing to do it, and some persons said it would not be done so long as Mr. George remained Commissioner. One argument used against it was that £4,000 had been spent on a station at Congdon Street. No wonder the Commissioner grumbled at being asked to put in an extra siding, when such a large expenditure as that was incurred in one place. On the whole, the Minister was to be congratulated on these estimates.

MR. DIAMOND: In justice to his worthy colleague who had just spoken, it was quite refreshing to hear a member of this House talk quietly and to the point on a subject he thoroughly understood. Referring again to the system of keeping railway accounts, and trotting out one of his old hobbies, he must repeat that the only satisfactory way to keep these accounts was to treat the railways as a merchant would treat an important branch of his business. A railway should be treated as a purely trading concern, and the accounts kept accordingly. Instead of talking of the income from railways as revenue, let us call it income from a trading concern, and let us call the expenditure the outgoing. Money spent on railways was spent for making revenue, and should be so treated in the accounts. He would keep on this subject until the railways were treated as trading concerns, and until the method of accounts was altered accordingly. Reference had been made to a reduction of railway rates. Before we could talk of a general reduction of rates, especially in the goldfields traffic, we must to a certain extent duplicate the lines. When the Eastern Railway was projected, it was to run up the valley of the Swan, where there would not be such steep grades as on the present route. Now when the vast bulk of the traffic had to go up the steep grades, the cost of haulage outward was much increased; consequently he would not advise a duplication of line on the present route to the Eastern Goldfields, but that another line should be constructed up the valley of the Swan to Northam, the gradients being easier and the cost of haulage less. From Northam outward he understood the line needed regrading, its present course being undulating; and he was told that the cost of haulage

under present conditions was increased by 20 per cent.

MR. BURGESS: How long ago was that? There were new engines now.

MR. DIAMOND: Conjointly with the idea of reducing the cost of haulage, we must consider the cost of duplicating the line and regrading it. The Minister should also give particular attention to back freight, in considering rates. The trucks must otherwise come back empty; and the haulage on the down grade was very light. Decrease the rates, and there would be a considerable increase in the quantity of ore sent to the coast for treatment. Differential rates were imposed in New South Wales to attract trade. Goods were carried from Sydney to Hay at a lower rate than to a place between Sydney and Hay. This was done to attract the Riverina trade. Victoria retaliated, and carried goods at a loss. With such differential rates he entirely disagreed. The rates on our own produce should be as low as possible so long as no district was unduly favoured.

MR. NEEDHAM regretted that there was not time for fuller discussion. While congratulating the Minister on his presentation of the Estimates, one could not congratulate him on some of the features of railway administration. The railways were under the control of a gentleman who from a commercial point of view was a man of ability, and was making the department a commercial success. But another side of the question must be stated, even at the risk of repeating some statements already made in the House. Though the Estimates showed increases, perhaps deserved, in the salaries of high officers, yet the men whose earnest and conscientious work had helped to make the railways successful should have received a little more consideration. Even now it was not impossible to remedy their grievances. Though for the past year a section of the men had worked under an industrial agreement, that agreement was not worth the paper it was written on. The agreement provided that the men should be reviewed twice a year—in January and June—with a view to ascertaining who by length of service or by ability were entitled to the increases provided by the classification. That clause was not

carried out; for since the agreement was made there was only one review, and few men received increases as a result of it. The management might say that increases were not justified; but it was lamentable that while so few comprehended in the agreement received increases, we found increases on the Estimates for men who were receiving higher wages. This was unfair, and was a poor incentive to the men to remain loyal to the conditions of the agreement. It was publicly boasted that the Commissioner was the only head of a railway department to introduce industrial agreements with the workers. But what was the good of ink and paper when some men who had rendered valuable service for six or seven years were not in any way rewarded? True there was an increase of £5,497 for wages in the traffic, locomotive workshops, ways and works, stores, etc. How had that sum been allocated? He indorsed the remarks of the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton) as to the pernicious system whereby men in the ways and works branch, after working almost every day for 12 months, were temporarily dismissed just about the time when they would otherwise receive holidays and other privileges of permanent men. This went on for years. If the men were worthy of retention after two or three years' service, it was scandalous that they should be dismissed for a few hours and then re-engaged so that they might be denied a few paltry holidays or a 6d. a day increase. Had these Estimates been discussed earlier, perhaps more would have been heard of them. He hoped the Minister would, with his usual fairness, consider the various points mentioned.

MR. GILL: The information given as to the locomotive branch by the member for North Fremantle would be valuable to the Minister and perhaps to the department. The Estimates showed remarkable increases to the salaried officers. He (Mr. Gill) believed that these officers should be fairly remunerated; for by offering good salaries we might fairly expect to get the best men. But a large body of men in the lower ranks was cheated out of just dues. By an agreement with the Commissioner these men were at certain times entitled to increases

on the recommendation of their foremen. He was not in a position to give the number of men entitled to increase. Unfortunately he did not succeed in getting the information asked for some time ago. However, he knew that a large number of men were entitled to an increase of payment under the terms of the agreement, as they were recommended for increases by their foremen. He was given to understand on good authority that the Commissioner had stated that, although a large number of men were entitled to increases when recommended by their foremen, still he could not see his way to give increases as the railways could not afford it. If that had been a legitimate excuse, one could have accepted it, but the Estimates coming on top of that statement showed that the excuse was not satisfactory. There were increases on the Estimates, and these increases would cause dissatisfaction amongst those who had not received increases which were due to them. The salaried staff on the railways were not being excessively paid. In most cases they were not receiving the same rate of pay as men doing similar work in the other States. The Commissioner was not dealing fairly and squarely according to the agreement entered into with the men on the wages staff. The agreement should be carried out to the letter; then it would lead to better results. It was shown by the annual report of the railways that the increases in wages were not equal to the increases of the salaried staff. That was a state of affairs which must prove unsatisfactory. It was not the men in the office who did the practical work of the railways, for when there was an increase in traffic, the men outside had to tackle the work, although when there was a large increase there was more work to be done in the office. This was an aspect which required to be watched carefully. There was an increase in the office staff but no increase in the wages staff. When the Commissioner of Railways took up his position he adopted a sensible attitude. He said it was his intention to reduce the number of officers considerably, as they were duplicated in many instances, and there were more officers than necessary. That was the right stand to take, and had the Commissioner been a prac-

tical man he would have carried his intention into effect; but not being a practical man he was not able to cope with the position. Instead of the number of officers and offices being reduced, they were increasing considerably. A new office had been brought into existence recently, and perhaps it was too early to speak of that office; it was anticipated by some that it would do good. He alluded to an office called the "Transport office," in which there were 14 to 20 highly-paid officers. He hoped that office would do good, but had very grave doubts about it. This was an idea that emanated from Victoria. In introducing the Estimates the Minister said that merit was always rewarded in the railway service. That was a good sentiment, but on looking through the Estimates he was of opinion that merit in the railway service was not a necessary qualification for promotion. Oftentimes it was a drawback. If a stranger was seeking admission to the service, and he had the choice of good experience or a good friend, that stranger would do well to choose the good friend, and would score every time against the man with the experience. One case stood out prominently. One of the most efficient officers in the service at the present time was an inspector who had shown, on more than one occasion, that in times of difficulty he was capable of coping with any trouble that might arise, and on every occasion he had proved equal to the task. But this inspector was not a man of the ordinary office type and did not believe in redtape. If this inspector on his rounds saw anything wrong he would see that it was quickly put right. The ordinary course would be to let things remain wrong and report them, and then go back and see if the matter had been righted; if not, report it again. Although this inspector was one of the most able men in the traffic branch, he was at the bottom of the list both in salary and position. Therefore merit did not get its reward. This was owing to a want of knowledge on the part of the Commissioner. One of the best qualifications for the head of a railway service was to be able to select good officers. If we had such a man, he would be capable of managing the railways correctly; but when the Commissioner had to rely on officers under him

he was likely to be misled. In regard to the classification of the salaried staff of the service, for a long time the officers had been promised a classification. The officers had been working under great disabilities, and had not been paid the rate of salary they deserved. This applied more particularly to the officers in charge and night officers, men who had to work 12 hours a day and seven days a week. Was it a fair thing to ask anyone to work such long hours for £120 or £130 a year? It was not fair nor reasonable. At the present time in the suburban areas these officers were supposed to get off one night a week according to an agreement entered into, but the system was only carried out sometimes. A man might become sick in a signal box, and the relieving officer had then to relieve him. The officer whose turn it was to go off was deprived of his relief. This was a matter which the Minister should take in hand and have attended to. At the present time the stationmaster at Perth was working 12 hours a day, which was unreasonable. These long hours were to be found nowhere else in Australia. The Commissioner was deserving of blame for misleading the House with reference to an appointment made some time ago. We were told that Mr. Gatherer was the only man suitable for a particular position, and that there was no man in the service who could have taken that position. This statement was made to throw dust in the eyes of members. Mr. Gatherer's position in the service was to pass sleepers; and to say that there was no one in the service capable of doing that work was ridiculous. The necessity for an air shaft in the tunnel had been referred to. This was a very dangerous state of affairs. Only recently one of the drivers on a locomotive fainted in a tunnel and fell off his engine. This was owing to the want of an air shaft, and it would not be very expensive to put one down from the top of the hill to the top of the tunnel. It would be the means of saving men's lives, and would preserve their health and prevent accident. Some little time ago a train ran into a runaway siding. It toppled over the bank and everything was destroyed. These runaway sidings were not constructed in a proper manner.

Should a passenger train run away, which was possible if it were not supplied with vacuum brakes, the result would be the death of all the passengers. The sidings were constructed with the deliberate object of stopping the train, wrecking it and smashing it to atoms. Everyone who was an authority to whom he had spoken said that it was possible to so construct runaway sidings as to block a train without smashing it. It was a thing that was worth looking into, as at present if a train toppled over the bank, the whole of the trucks were destroyed. Should there be carriages running, they must be destroyed in the same way. An endeavour should be made so that a train could be stopped without being smashed. He wished to refer to the Perth goods sheds, which not only the Government but Parliament would have to take into consideration. Anyone seeing the state of affairs in Melbourne Road must be convinced that the matter had become serious. The traffic was enormous. Gravel, stone, bricks, and merchandise of all kinds were going out there. The time was not far distant when the Ministry would have to take into consideration the advisability of removing those goods sheds. Only a few months ago he was working there and he had seen trains standing there owing to the want of space in the goods yard. The whole of the locomotive yard would be required soon for the traffic coming into Perth. Provision would have to be made either by removing the goods sheds altogether, or having some form of overhead bridge or some means of getting through.

DR. ELLIS: There were one or two questions he would like to ask the Minister. First he would like the hon. gentleman to tell us what interest he purposed charging on the loan money for the railways this year. The department had been charging themselves three per cent. in the past, and we were paying four per cent. for money. They had not charged themselves more than three per cent. since 1896, and by that means they had diminished their interest bill by £31,000. They had charged themselves £277,000, and it cost the State £308,000, a little difference of £31,000 to the credit of the Commissioner. Another matter of interest was the price

paid for water. It was a fair thing in the interests of the goldfields that we should know how much a year was saved by the water scheme to the Railway Department, because that really should go to the credit of the water scheme. The railways paid for water something like £30,000 a year more before the water scheme was brought into operation. He hoped that by next year, if the Minister could manage to consider the railway figures, he would let us know how much capital he had out of loan money since the year 1896. There was a little difference of some £600,000 in the two reports published by the Railway Department as to the amount of capital they had had. In regard to engines, no one with a knowledge of machinery would have pooling of engines. Every engine had its own peculiarities, which had to be known. The present Commissioner of Railways, not being a railway man, did not appreciate the importance of these little technical details. That was shown by the fact that those loco. sheets, which were most useful to get at the cost of the running of the railways, had been suppressed. Once we had very accurate figures as to the cost of running engines, but that system was abolished, and now the department themselves did not know the facts. Regarding the tunnel, credit was due to the member for North Fremantle for calling attention to it. The grade, 1 in 40, was almost the highest in the country. It was terrible to find that a train might be at the mercy of a man liable to faint on account of vitiated atmosphere. One would like to say a word about the differential railway rates. The Minister said a table was being prepared in which the differential railway rates were being done away with. The hon. gentleman did not say whether they were going to raise or lower the rates. He looked forward with a certain amount of equanimity, because in the past we were not united in the matter of getting the rates lowered, but in future the agriculturists would suffer just as much from high rates as the goldfields people, and they would be able to unite against the high rates. He was anxious to see how far Mr. George's natural cupidity could be overcome by common sense, by reducing the railway rates to something like a reasonable proportion. He did not

suppose that even Mr. George would suggest doing away with preferential rates. Preferential rates should be increased, because anybody who understood traffic knew that once a train was loaded up and put together the cost was very much less taken on the average when long distances were traversed. The same held in regard to passenger trains. The railways in Hungary were not paying until the zone system was introduced, but after that they very rapidly began to pay. Another point was as to the freight charges on the fields. Demurrage was, he understood, the same as between Perth and Fremantle and Kalgoorlie and Fremantle, and he did not think that should be so, because the demurrage between Perth and Fremantle must be greater than the time taken over the trip, whereas it was less than the time taken over the trip to Kalgoorlie. This was another reason why the preferential rates should be increased. It would be much better if the Minister next year would show sectional returns and accurate sheets, so that members could make reasonable comparisons between our railways and other railways.

MR. CONNOR: It would have been better if the old system of preparing the Estimates had been adopted, so that members could see at a glance where individual increases or decreases occurred. In one item (material and stores) there was a decrease of £32,000. Was one branch of the service to be starved in order to bring down the expenditure? Next year the Minister should bring down a return showing the state of the rolling-stock for the last five years. It would be an interesting return, and would provoke considerable discussion. In any case, it was information members should have before being asked to pass the Estimates. Twelve months ago we were told that the dining cars would soon be running; but they were not running yet. [MR. BURGESS: Yes; they were.] The traffic management on the Great Southern railway was not as it should be. The growing population along that railway should receive more attention in the matter of trains. Claims made against the department were not treated in a just manner. No claim was paid, whether it be just or not; and people were forced to go to law. There was no mention on the Estimates of a new railway station for

Fremantle. The port was being absolutely starved through the present railway, so that the construction of a new station and dock should be proceeded with.

MR. A. J. WILSON: There was no need on his part to say much on these Estimates, in view of the fact that we had so many railway experts in the House. The speech of the member for North Fremantle being very "meaty" should cause the Minister to make considerable inquiries. Many sleepers were taken out of the railroads that should not be taken out, unless the improvement work consisted in laying down heavier rails. Timber was being cut out near the railway line, and the sleeper-hewer had to go farther away to get timber to supply to the Commissioner. Formerly the department carted the sleepers from the hewer to the railway; but now the system was to pay on delivery at a siding, the benefit falling to the teamster and not the sleeper-hewer, who was eking out a miserable and unsatisfactory existence on a price, and in no way commensurate with the difficulties and hardships that had to be contended with. There was no question about the superiority of the hewn sleeper over the sawn sleeper. These sleeper-hewers were, in one sense, performing a useful service to the Commissioner, and should be entitled to more favourable consideration. The Minister no doubt would deal with the matter in a way satisfactory to the men. On the South-Western Railway, where there was much heavy traffic in timber, it was a question whether the ordinary capacity of the railway would not be improved by laying down heavier rails and working with heavier engines. A saving might be effected in that way if the outlay were not too great for the finances. In regard to compensation for claims, accidents, and losses of various kinds, a certain number of travelling inspectors of the permanent way were paid high salaries for looking after this branch of work. The unfortunate accident at Poison Gully reminded members of the almost criminal carelessness of the permanent way officers, in not making more suitable provision for carrying off water at that gully. Referring to station-masters and night officers who were required to be on duty seven days a week

and 12 hours a day, one was receiving £140, another £150, a few as high as £180, and at some few stations a higher rate was paid. In fixing the salaries for those officers there seemed to be no regard for the earning capacity of the several stations and the responsibility of the officer in charge. There ought to be proper grading for those officers according to capacity and responsibility, and the men should be paid accordingly. One man who had been a stationmaster for five years was still kept at £180 a year, without any increase. When men found they were not treated with what they considered to be fairness, they lost heart in the work, and good work could not be expected from them to the same extent as from contented officers. The classification of this portion of the service should be pushed on.

MR. HORAN congratulated the Minister on the introduction of these Estimates, and congratulated the department on the excellent report presented for the past year. One subject he wished to mention was the rate book, and he hoped the Minister would consider at an early date the publication of a new rate book to remove the anomalies which the Minister had admitted in connection with railway freights in various parts of the country. He hoped also the Minister would give consideration to the question of the power of engines; for although the power of engines on these railways had been increased considerably in recent years, yet in the management of all great railways elsewhere the first consideration was to reduce the grades in order to increase the hauling capacity of the engines, and thus reduce the cost of working. He agreed with the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piesse) in referring in kindly terms to the late Mr. Rotherham; but in regard to spark arresters on railway engines, he had asked a question in the House recently in regard to the number of arresters which had been removed from engines; but the information supplied to the Minister, and given to this House, was incorrect in stating that no spark arresters had been removed. The fact was that hundreds of spark arresters could be seen alongside the stations at Perth and Fremantle; and it was absurd for the Minister to say that none had been removed from the engines. The late locomotive engineer

was responsible also for the introduction of spiral springs on the railways, and these had been the cause of many complaints from the goldfields on account of springs breaking. He believed some 8,000 of these springs were used, and that dozens of examiners were occupied in going about fixing up the broken springs. Many thousands of pounds were wasted on this innovation, which had been tried in the Eastern States years ago and condemned. In regard to the running of engines, an alteration was made in July last in the system of working engines from Northam to Coolgardie. Prior to that date they ran from Northam to Southern Cross, were stabled there, and returned to Northam. In July, Southern Cross was practically cut out as a depôt, and a new depôt was established at Merriden and another at Karalee. The object was as far as possible to introduce the eight-hours system for drivers by working three eight-hours instead of two twelve-hours sections; but that object had not been successfully achieved. The return presented a few days ago by the Minister would not bear criticism. Concerning this matter, one deputation waited on the ex-Minister for Railways (Mr. Rason) and another on the present Minister. As to the latter, when a Minister received a deputation, he should carry away with him in his notes some idea of the subject; but the department, in preparing the return asked for, relied on a report of the deputation published in the Southern Cross newspaper, which report was not too accurate. But the statements of the deputation, even as reported in that newspaper, could not be answered by the department. The deputation complained of the removal of the barracks, and said nothing about the new tonnage load table mentioned in the return; and that table did not come into force till a month after the removal. Moreover, the tonnage load table would have the same effect from Southern Cross direct as from the two barracks at Merriden and Karalee. The pooling of engines was a most expensive arrangement, abandoned years ago in all properly conducted railway systems. When engines were pooled, drivers took little care of them, and were satisfied so long as the engine finished the run; whereas if a driver were given

one engine, a low cost of operating did him credit. The present system required no less than six sets of men on one engine from the time it left Northam till it returned to Northam. That had a prejudicial effect on the engine. No less than forty sets of men were frequently sent over the section in one week as passengers, in order to meet trains at the depôts, and as much as £10 or £20 a week was paid to men who were thus doing practically nothing. This was admitted by the Chief Mechanical Engineer. The return presented showed a saving by assuming that the proposed system was actually carried out; but in one week alone, of 26 trains that arrived at Southern Cross, only two ran through; therefore such items in the return as "lighting up eight engines at Southern Cross" were simply absurd. Again, the return stated that at Southern Cross there was effected a saving of a clerk at £200 per annum. This was incorrect; for though the clerk was removed, another man was put in his place. Moreover, the return took no account of the cost of the new barracks at Karalee and Merriden, estimated at £5,000 each, nor of the cost of the luxurious barracks at Southern Cross—£20,000 or £30,000—no longer used, nor the cost of the Southern Cross engine sheds, little used, nor of interest on capital. After examining the departmental return he had interviewed the Minister, and requested him to receive a deputation from the leaders of the two principal railway unions, and a number of members of Parliament. The Minister took the extraordinary course of refusing to receive the deputation, being apparently disinclined to hear the two sides of the question, and relying entirely on the statements of his officers. The case had undoubtedly been misrepresented to the Minister, particularly owing to the fact that the officer who originated the scheme was the one called on to prepare the return. Needless to say he supported his own scheme as far as practicable. The return was made out on a purely theoretical basis, ignoring the fact that the scheme had not been practically carried out. So strongly did the people of Southern Cross feel as to the Minister's extraordinary refusal to receive a deputation that the municipal council were

sending a deputation to the leader of the Opposition. If the new system was demonstrably for the benefit of the State, the people would be satisfied; but it was rather unique for the Commissioner to suggest that the introduction of the new load table had any effect on the system. The load table could be operated on exactly the same system with Southern Cross as a depôt. The eight-hour system had not been introduced; because the trains were running some three to five hours late, and the men were on duty as long as ever on account of the defective condition of the engines. The alternative scheme suggested by the leaders of the two unions and by him (Mr. Horan) was the establishment of barracks at Burracoppin. This would enable the eight-hour system to be worked. The men would have no objection to working from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie, because the men were at Boulder now. The Minister should explain this matter. He (Mr. Horan) disliked unsettled conditions in railway management. He had no objection to the present Commissioner, but with changes of Commissioners we had alterations of system. Barracks were constructed at Northam and Southern Cross, and now there was an alteration in the system, and the buildings had become useless. The same thing had happened in regard to the Midland Junction offices. Probably had a new station building been erected at Perth, another Commissioner might come along and condemn the building as useless. All these changes might not have taken place if an expert had been appointed, because experts generally worked on common lines. We should take into consideration the question of the appointment of an inspector to hold inquiries into accidents. No charge was made against the integrity of officers who now conducted the inquiries, but they were wrapped up in the interests of the department, and it would be better to have more impartial reports forwarded direct to the Minister.

MR. McLARTY: The fencing of the South-Western Railway line was an urgent matter. Many of the sleepers pulled out of the permanent way might be used for constructing cheap and useful fences. Railway sleepers were too shallow at present, because the spike or

dog went almost through them. It would be better if the sleepers were an inch deeper. The railways appeared to an outsider to have been worked at an enormous cost; but as it had been said that £70,000 was saved through the use of water from the Coolgardie Water Scheme, the railways ought now to show better results.

MR. BURGESS : It appeared we were to have the railway rates raised except those to Coolgardie. If that was the case, the Minister would have a rough time during recess. The statement that £70,000 had been saved on water must be incorrect. The largest saving made in a year of drought was £40,000. Incorrect statements should not be made to show that the water scheme was such a great success. It was time the department made other provision for supplying water to places like Beverley, Midland Junction, and Fremantle. The Avon River should have been dammed to supply the locomotives with water at Beverley. In dry seasons no doubt the water so dammed would be bad for the boilers, but that could not be said of the water in the river during the past few years. It was also time more rolling-stock was secured. Farmers had now to give several days' notice before they could be supplied with trucks. How could the item for rolling-stock be decreased when there was necessity for farther rolling-stock? Some members complained of the manner in which the railway accounts were kept; but the fact that the railway accountant had, in open competition with the world, been chosen as Auditor General showed the complaint must be wrong and that the department was up to date. It was claimed the railways should be made to pay. No doubt they should be treated as a commercial concern, but they must be used to promote settlement. The Collie coal industry was aided by the railways, and also the mining industry; and agriculture should also be assisted, because the department would reap double return for the money spent. We should not fear the Commonwealth in appointing Interstate Commissions in regard to our railway rates. The Commonwealth authorities had better not interfere with our railways. They were not justified in doing so by reason of the

treatment we had received from the Commonwealth Parliament lately. It was time the expenditure on the huge Midland Junction Workshops stopped. No doubt the works were wanted, but it was doubtful if all the money should have been expended at once. The money should have been carried over a year or two. There was no need to spend half-a-million straight away, for when the money was exhausted there would be a reaction. Most of the important matters would come up on the Loan Estimates, but in regard to the duplication of the Eastern Railway and the suggestion that a railway should run round by the Avon River, it would be better when a new line was built to run it in a straight line, taking it north of the Helena River and then eastward.

MR. N. J. MOORE : From the speeches we had heard to-night from practical men, the Commissioner would receive hints which would be of value in connection with the administration of his department. He (Mr. Moore) would refer to anomalies as to the rate book, and he hoped there would be a careful revision of that rate book without delay. Quite recently in Bunbury a water scheme was entered into and the pipes were procured from Mephan Ferguson's foundry. The first lot of pipes were obtained by rail at a cost of 25s. per ton. That was considered an exceedingly high price; so it was decided to see what could be done by steamer, and it was found, notwithstanding the fact that the municipal council paid 10s. per ton by steamer, 2s. 6d. wharfage at Fremantle, 2s. 6d. wharfage at Bunbury, and 4s. freight from Perth to Fremantle, that the pipes were delivered at Bunbury at 19s. per ton, as against 25s. per ton by the Railway Department. That was a matter that should interest the Commissioner, who was fond of stating that the railways should be run as a commercial undertaking. As to water supply, some improvements could be effected. For some years past at Bunbury the water had been brought in by special train from Picton Junction. Quite recently the municipal council offered to supply the Commissioner with water at 1s. 6d. per thousand gallons, but the offer was not accepted. Notwithstanding that fact the Railway Depart-

ment were charging all steamers that took water from Bunbury at the rate of 10s. per thousand gallons, some 600 per cent. in advance of what would have been charged by the municipality. In connection with the vote for new works and improvements, £25,000, during the next year it was to be hoped improvements would be effected out of revenue. In reply to a question it was stated that the duplication between Armadale and East Perth was paid for from loan—a sum of £30,000. It was urged in favour of the construction of the Jandakot line that it would relieve the traffic on the South-Western Railway to a considerable extent. He did not see that this £30,000 would have been much better spent in the construction of the Jandakot Railway instead of duplicating the line between Armadale and East Perth. Reference had been made by the member for York to Collie coal, and he hoped careful inquiries would be made after the discussion which had taken place to-day as to the use of that coal. The department should be satisfied that Collie coal was on the tender of the engine which was supposed to have caused so much destruction. Those in favour of the use of Collie coal would be satisfied if the Government decided not to use coal on the lines running through agricultural districts during the portion of the year when there was danger. From his experience of Western Australia, fires occurred whether Collie coal or Newcastle coal or no coal at all was used at this time of the year. He hoped due inquiries would be made. If it was necessary to make exception during a certain period of the year, the Government must also recognise the necessity for giving every encouragement to the local product which was employing a large number of men, and that those who were interested in the Collie coal industry and had an uphill fight should receive some consideration.

MR. E. P. HENSHAW: The railway lines, particularly in the South-Western district or in any district where cattle strayed, should be fenced or secured in some way. Only a week or two ago the member for Nelson asked for a return showing the number of fatalities on the Bridgetown line, and the return showed that there were a number of accidents and people lost a number of stock. The same thing was going on in other parts

of the South-Western country, particularly between Brunswick Junction and Collie. This country was well suited to the breeding of cattle, and it was quite common for cattle to be killed on the railway line. It would not cost a great deal to fence the line, and it was to be hoped that would be done in the near future. Only a week ago a drunken man was taken off the line between Collie and Brunswick, and had the line been fenced this man would not have been able to get on the railway. One or two people had been killed on that line. The Minister should take into serious consideration the fencing of lines wherever possible. In the construction of station buildings he would like to see Donnybrook freestone used as far as possible. The Bunbury railway station was burnt down the other day, which furnished an excellent opportunity for constructing the new building with Donnybrook stone. The cost would be very little in excess of that for brick, and it would be an indication to the people in the district as to what could be done with this stone. The State would in this way build up an industry. He would like to see the local construction of rolling-stock as far as possible, and the work should be carried out departmentally. There was an immense plant at Midland Junction which could easily be used for building wagons. At present wagons were imported, and this had been the case for years past. Work of this description should rightly be carried out at Midland Junction, for we had the timber in the country and there was no reason why the wagons could not be built locally. Men could be employed continuously instead of having the system which had obtained in the past of wagons being imported and a rush of men being required to put them together, and after the work was completed the men being put off. As to the duties of district superintendents, he was not satisfied with the work given to these officers. The Commissioner attempted to deal with all the details of the railway system, and that was the reason why the system was not as effective as it should be. It was a common thing for people in outlying districts to write to the Commissioner for some convenience, perhaps the opening of a crossing. The reply generally received was that the Commis-

sioner would look into the matter when he visited the district; in the meantime, the people had to suffer inconvenience. Many matters could be referred to the district superintendents, and people would get a reply in a few days instead of having to wait for months. In connection with the fuel used on the railways, there was a coal inspector appointed, and as far as the inspection went it was an utter farce, resulting in rubbish being foisted on to the Government. The system of inspection was as follows. The trucks were filled from the screens of the company, and they were trimmed by the employees of the company; then the trucks were sent 100 yards or 200 yards along the line, where they were inspected. It must be obvious that the only coal that could be inspected was that on the surface, which had already been trimmed for inspection. The inspector could not see by this method what class of coal was being sent on the railways.

MR. FRANK WILSON: The inspector was at the stump.

MR. HENSHAW: The system was a farce and should be remedied at the earliest opportunity. Another thing was the method the department had of distributing the orders for sleepers and hewn timber. He had asked for a return to be laid on the table, but that had not yet been done. An inspector was appointed for the South-Western District who distributed the order for sleepers. No record was made of these contracts. They were made by word of mouth, and there was no stipulation which would guarantee the completion of the contract; neither was there any provision to ensure that the workers who did the work would get their money. That should be remedied. In regard to the price paid for the sleepers, the Arbitration Court some time ago fixed it at 1s. 3d. at the stump; but at present the Railway Department was paying 11½d. and 1s. ¾d. at the stump. The men ought to receive at least the wage stipulated by the Arbitration Court. At present these men working for the State were not receiving more than 8s. a day. The work was hard and dangerous, and should be paid for better than at present.

MR. GREGORY understood the object of the Government was to close up and

get through all the business, and there was a very strong desire to discuss as fully as possible the Loan Estimates; therefore he wanted it to be distinctly understood that the debate to-night was not in any sense a debate upon the Railway Department. There were criticisms which could and ought to be offered.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We ought to have had time to offer them.

MR. GREGORY: It was a pity we were not in a position to fully discuss these Estimates. There were many instances where the Minister had done admirable work for the State, but there were other things in which we would like to see alterations. He would have been very pleased to offer some criticism in connection with the department, but was not prepared to stay here all night and then have to come to-morrow and discuss the Loan Estimates.

THE MINISTER thanked members for the criticism on the Railway Estimates, but he did not wish to take up any length of time in reply, and it was not necessary to do so. There were one or two matters which had been touched upon. There was that alluded to by the member for North Fremantle, as to the little amount of air in the tunnel spoken of. It was a disgrace to allow men to work in any place where it was possible for them to become insensible while doing their duty. Another matter brought forward was the pooling of engines. The hon. member disagreed with the experience of even more practical men than himself. It had been demonstrated in America and other places that the pooling of engines resulted in great saving. He would read one or two extracts from the report on the organisation and working of railways in America by Neville Priestly:—

To avoid engines lying idle needlessly, they are pooled, that is they are not confined to one crew of enginemen and firemen. The practice is followed with both passenger and goods engines, but the procedure differs with the two classes, and is as follows. With passenger engines there is a limited pool, that is there are two or three sets of men only assigned to each engine, one taking it to the out station and another bringing it back, or one crew doing the first return trip, and the second crew doing the next, and so on. Under this arrangement more work is got out of an engine than would be possible if it was confined to one crew, but not so much as it might do. In times of pressure the number of crews

is increased and the engine kept running continuously, time only being allowed for it to turn round and be made ready for the next trip. The engines of fast goods trains are pooled in the same way as passenger engines. That the engines are not seriously abused is clear from the number under repairs. In 1902, on one large system, the average was not 8 per cent. of the total locomotive equipment, but this was regarded as high, and was put down to the excessive work taken out of the engines during a period of unusual demand. The normal figure is about 6 per cent. only. It was, however, nowhere contended that the engine did not receive better treatment when confined to one crew than when pooled; but the enormous saving which resulted from pooling, both in first cost of engines and in standing room in round houses and in shops, was considered to more than compensate for the increased repair account, and was held to fully justify the practice. The essential condition for the successful operation of the arrangement is careful supervision.

He thought that report would do a lot to counteract the opinion expressed by the member for North Fremantle. Another matter brought forward was the fact that a few increases had been made in the salaried staff of late. It mattered not to him (the Minister) whether a man worked with his hands or with his brains, he should receive any increase to which he might be justly entitled. The increase in the Estimates for the wages staff amounted to £8,997; and then we had taken away from the wages staff and placed in the salaried staff a number of officers, the increased payment being £4,906; these two sums amounting to £13,903. The total increases in salaries for those in receipt of over £200 per annum amounted to £1,273; while the increases granted to those receiving under £200 amounted to £4,152. Members would see that every grade of the service was recognised, and the fact that these figures appeared on our Estimates this year was only an indication of an effort to introduce the classification scheme asked for by the member for Balkatta. Another matter brought forward was that in regard to Southern Cross. It would take a considerable amount of time if he went into the question fully; and he did not intend to do so. The member for Menzies moved a motion four years ago for an eight-hours day, and the system referred to was gone into in June, 1902. He (the Minister) mentioned a few nights ago the amount of overtime some

men were working. In relation to the idea that Southern Cross should be done away with as a dépôt, a deputation was mentioned. The fact that the hon. member (Mr. Horan) had to apologise to him for the behaviour of some of those men only showed what some of those men were capable of. The hon. member apologised to him for the two secretaries, for their behaviour. As long as he (the Minister) held the position he did he would endeavour to do his duty to every man and woman in the community. He hoped every consideration would be given to the classification scheme that was introduced, and that the scheme would be brought to a successful issue.

Railways and Tramways, £1,286,509.

Item—Secretary, £450 :

MR. NEEDHAM moved an amendment :

That the item be reduced by £50.

He did this because he wanted to protest against the manner in which men who had been engaged for 16 or 18 months had been dealt with in regard to increases they should have obtained.

MR. RASON: This officer was Mr. Rushton. The mover of the amendment could not be serious. Whatever might have happened to other officers, the question was whether Mr. Rushton deserved an increase.

THE MINISTER opposed the amendment. In New South Wales a similar officer received £900, in Queensland £600. Surely the hon. member would not reduce this salary because other salaries were not increased.

MR. KEYSER supported the amendment. Mr. Rushton might deserve an increase; but 22 clerks at £170, 17 at £160, and 22 at £140 had not received any increases. Though the Government said the finances did not warrant increases, we found that the higher officers received increases of £15, £20, and £40. Mr. Rushton was one of the best officers in the State; but he should not receive an increase when men with families of seven or eight, and therefore more valuable assets to the State than Mr. Rushton, were neglected.

MR. GREGORY: Would the hon. member pay a man according to his family?

MR. KEYSER: Yes. A man with a family of 10 was a better State asset than one with a family of two.

MR. GREGORY opposed the amendment. If he had a vacancy for a responsible man he would not ask an applicant what was the size of his family. If that principle were adopted the salary of the Colonial Secretary must be reduced, and given perhaps to the preceding speaker. He (Mr. Gregory), when in charge of the department for six weeks, came in contact with Mr. Rushton, and found him a walking departmental encyclopædia. He was a most efficient officer; and it was gratifying that the Minister had not adopted the narrow idea of paying every man the same salary. Responsible officers must have extra payment. Special consideration was shown to the lower-grade officers; for nearly all increases were given to them.

MR. NEEDHAM: What about the 800 men who had no increases at all?

MR. GREGORY: Surely the hon. member did not wish his amendment passed.

MR. HENSHAW protested against high salaries being increased while men at the bottom of the ladder had not a living wage. Some 103 night officers worked for less than £3 a week.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: And if there were one vacancy, 50 men would apply for it.

MR. HENSHAW: That interjection showed that these men were starved into submission. The Secretary to the Commissioner might deserve the increase; but we had no right to increase salaries while so many men were not receiving a living wage. Only a short time ago the fettlers had to fight for an increase on 7s. a day. The wage fixed for various tradesmen by the Arbitration Court had not been paid by the Government. Till these men were fairly treated, we should not increase the higher salaries. We were told by the Premier that there would be no increases of salaries exceeding £200.

THE MINISTER: Railway men were not civil servants.

MR. HENSHAW: Parliament had control of the department.

MR. BOLTON, on principle, supported the reduction, not because of animus against Mr. Rushton. The amendment he considered a test question as to all in-

creases; and if it were defeated, he would not speak or vote against any other increase.

MR. WATTS supported the last speaker. It was not right to increase good salaries without increasing lower salaries in the same proportion. The night officers worked perhaps much harder and as efficiently as Mr. Rushton. Their work was much more arduous. Mr. Rushton was fairly well paid. Let this be a test case. It was about time we made a vigorous protest against such increases.

MR. HORAN supported the amendment. There was no desire to undervalue Mr. Rushton's services, or to insinuate that he did not deserve an increase. The member for Menzies seemed to undervalue the services of officers not set down for increases. In view of the Premier's statement as to no increases of salaries under £200, we were justified in striking out this increase. In personal explanation, he would say as to the transfer of men from Southern Cross, discussed earlier in the evening, that he had expressed regret to the Minister for something which took place between the Minister and another gentleman, but had not apologised for anything which he (Mr. Horan) did or said.

MR. DIAMOND opposed the amendment. It was his fixed principle that, when the head of a department recommended an increase and the Minister endorsed it, he followed the Minister unless there was something wrong. In this case there seemed to be nothing wrong. The member for Collie should be a little more careful in his illustrations. On the occasion referred to the leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition voted for this increase, and five members of the Labour party voted against it.

MR. HENSHAW: No accusation was made. The attention of the House was simply drawn to the fact that the men received 7s. a day then and received 8s. now.

THE MINISTER: There was no objection to this being a test question on the matter of the wages of the wages staff. When an industrial agreement had been entered into, wages were considerably increased. The increases on the Estimates were to carry out a scheme

of classification in the Railway Department.

MR. NEEDHAM: There was no intention to depreciate the services of the officer. It was only determined to point out the injustice being done to about 800 men who did not get advances.

MR. HENSHAW: The Commissioner should be made to carry out the terms of the industrial agreement. The Commissioner did not pay the wages the men were entitled to under agreement.

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

Ayes	...	...	13
Noes	...	...	23

Majority against ... 10

AYES.
 Mr. Bolton
 Mr. Carson
 Mr. Ellis
 Mr. Heitmann
 Mr. Henshaw
 Mr. Horan
 Mr. Keyser
 Mr. Needham
 Mr. Nelson
 Mr. Watts
 Mr. A. J. Wilson
 Mr. F. F. Wilson
 Mr. Troy (Teller).

NOES.
 Mr. Angwin
 Mr. Burges
 Mr. Cowcher
 Mr. Daglish
 Mr. Diamond
 Mr. Gordon
 Mr. Gregory
 Mr. Hardwick
 Mr. Hastie
 Mr. Holman
 Mr. Isdell
 Mr. Johnson
 Mr. Layman
 Mr. Lynch
 Mr. McLarty
 Mr. N. J. Moore
 Mr. S. F. Moore
 Mr. Piesse
 Mr. Quinlan
 Mr. Rason
 Mr. Taylor
 Mr. Frank Wilson
 Mr. Gill (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Item—Chief Accountant, £600 :

MR. RASON: There was an increase in the Accountant's Department of nearly £5,000, and the number of clerks was increased from 41 to 69. There was no intention of reflecting on the Accountant or any of the officers, but one could not understand why the expenditure had gone up so much.

THE MINISTER: The increase was due to the transfer of the officers of the Loco. Accountants' branch to the Chief Accountants' branch. The increase in this item was more than compensated for by the decrease of over £5,000 in the Loco. Accountants' branch.

MR. RASON: There was such a decrease on the Estimates of last year, but a decrease of £2,000 only on the money actually spent. However, if this were a transfer he was satisfied.

Item—District Superintendents (4), £1,750 :

MR. HORAN: The district superintendents should receive more powers and be appointed as local traffic managers. There was an enormous amount of circumlocution, and a district superintendent was now practically a medium for forwarding correspondence. In regard to the deputation, the Minister received it long before the case occurred, therefore it was scarcely fair to refer to that as the cause.

Item—Wages, traffic, locomotive workshops, ways, works, stores, etc., £711,532 :

MR. BOLTON: Men had been working constantly for seven years and were not on the permanent staff.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There had been no alteration this year from the practice which had obtained in the past. The same system was in force in other States in the Commonwealth; but he was of opinion that if a man could be kept for seven years, he should be placed on the permanent staff. Temporary hands received an extra 6d. per day because they did not receive the same privileges as permanent hands. He would see if the same rights could be extended to every man.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

This completed the vote for the department.

LABOUR DEPARTMENT (Minister, Hon. J. B. Holman).

GENERAL STATEMENT.

THE MINISTER: This is a new department, which the growing importance of the State demanded. It was recognised that the time had come for a department to be established to control industrial matters. I maintain it is a step in the right direction. We find in every State and every country a Department of Labour which receives great consideration. This department will assist greatly in the settlement of industrial troubles and matters connected with industrial affairs. The various branches of the department have been under different Ministers in the past, some under the Colonial Secretary and some under the Attorney General, and there are other Acts

now under the new department which have not received that attention they should have done in the past, which is shown by the amendment of the Truck Act. Laws connected with industrial affairs should receive the fullest attention. Last year the vote for this department totalled £4,550 and the expenditure in all branches amounted to £3,415, being a saving on the estimate of £1,135, the items not fully expended being salaries for Labour Bureau £170 and incidentals £108; incidentals, arbitration £480; friendly societies incidentals £356, and various other items amounting to £21. The vote this year amounts to £5,330, showing an increase on last year's vote of £780, and in expenditure £1,915; the increases being industrial salaries £637, made up by an increase in the salaries of £80 by the appointment of a clerk for factory work £75, and eight months provision for more inspectors of factories, as the Factories Act comes into force next January, £482. The appointment of inspectors is necessary under the Act. These inspectors will also work under the Early Closing and all industrial Acts if necessary. A return of £600 is estimated from the registration of factories; £350 will not be annual fees, but £250 will represent the annual revenue received from factories of Asiatics. This estimate is based on the number of factories in existence. As to the inspectors under the Early Closing Act, £482 will not be wholly expended because the inspectors with one exception have not yet been appointed, and instead of there being eight months' provision, six months only will be required for some and seven months for the chief inspector.

MR. GREGORY: What reason is there for any delay in the appointment of the factory inspector in Perth?

THE MINISTER: The chief inspector has been appointed nearly a month now, the officer's name is Mr. Vincent, and he was selected from a number of applicants. He had to undergo an examination, and proved himself superior to the other applicants. A member states that there was no examination. There were 12 applicants placed under examination, and even Mr. Vincent, who has passed examinations in Victoria, classed the examination as very stiff. Mr. Vincent is thoroughly conversant with all the Acts that will be

placed under his administration and he has a thorough knowledge of factory law. Some applications for appointment were received from Kalgoorlie, but no word accompanied the applications to warrant bringing these persons down to Perth for examination. I intend to make all appointments after this fashion in future, and I believe that is how appointments should be made. In cases like this merit must prevail. If a man has particular experience, I do not think members can cavil if an appointment is made without examination.

MR. N. J. MOORE: What are the principal qualifications?

THE MINISTER: A thorough knowledge of ventilation and of factories, and the Acts the officer will have to administer.

MR. GREGORY: Any consideration for previous work?

THE MINISTER: Yes; previous work was taken into consideration in selecting the 12 out of the 29 or 30 applicants. All appointments made in this department were transfers from other departments. There are some increases, one of £50 to the clerk of the Court of Arbitration. I consider this increase was justified. The clerk of the court is a solicitor admitted to practice, and has been of great assistance to the court. He was the compiler of records before the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration for a considerable time. The increase was promised to him. When Mr. James appointed the clerk of arbitration he promised that the salary should be very materially increased; and from my knowledge of the work done and the fact that this officer has been admitted to practice as a solicitor, I am sure the increase is warranted. An increase is given to the deputy clerk of the Court of Arbitration. We know he has important work to take on, and he will relieve Mr. Davis of a considerable amount of work which that officer has had to do in the past. The only other increase is for a junior clerk, and there are the annual increments. The contingencies under the industrial branch have increased to £830, which is £380 over the amount of last year's vote. Members will see that there is £350 taken from the vote under friendly societies. The contingencies vote for both branches is the same. Out

of the contingencies vote the fees of members of the court are paid, as well as the travelling expenses and allowances of the court, and of the clerk of the court, the reporting and typing of evidence, the printing and postages, printed reports of proceedings amounting to 7s. each. This year the whole of the printing of regulations connected with the Factories Act and the Early Closing Act, and the forms, will come out of this vote. Under friendly societies there is one small increase, that is to a junior clerk. Under the contingencies vote there is a reduction of £350, the vote of £600 last year being in excess of all requirements. The Labour Bureau comes under the Department of Labour. It was started in 1898, and I am pleased to say it has increased in popularity and has done better work every year it has been in existence. The total registrations this year to the end of November reached 8,716 and the total engagements 3,745, or nearly 44 or 45 per cent. of the applications made. One item of expense the department has to undergo is the issuing of passes for men to proceed up country. In the past there have been a great number of passes issued, and every possible care is taken to see that satisfactory reasons are given for the issue of passes. In almost every case before a pass is granted the department is satisfied that the application is *bona fide*, and for nearly every pass that is issued a guarantee is received that the amount will be repaid by someone. Under the Labour Bureau vote there are two annual increases, but the total increase is not large. There is an increase of £180 over the incidental expenses of last year, and £200 expenses incurred in the opening of new branches at Kulgoorlie, Cue, also at Fremantle a female branch. There is a great deal of expense in advertising. Last year it only cost £39 to advertise; this year £300 will be required. The bulk of the advertising is done in the *West Australian* and the *Morning Herald* by agreement made some months ago before the Government took office. I think it is a step in the right direction, and it accounts this year for a considerably larger number of successful applications than has ever been known in the past. I shall be pleased to give any information connected with the Labour Department which members ask for.

The Labour Bureau has done good work; and I trust that instead of very many people—and I refer especially to those looking for work—regarding the Labour Bureau as a charitable institution, they will disabuse their minds of that idea. Labour bureaux are established all over the world, and are anything but charitable institutions. I hope that those persons out of employment and those employers requiring workers will make more use of the Labour Bureau than they have done in the past.

[General discussion followed.]

Labour, £5,330 :

MR. GREGORY: This was a new department, and although he believed a certain amount of good work had been done in it he wished to enter his protest against the classification of the department; that was, we were going to have a department of Labour and of Labour alone. When we got into Committee he would, if allowed by the forms of the House to do so, move an amendment to try and make this department a department of commerce and labour. We wanted something on the same lines as the American system, where we should have information given to the public, not only helping the labourers in the State, but trying to do everything possible to bring labour and capital together. He desired to point out the necessity of endeavouring to bring them together. Unless there was capital to develop the country there was little use for the labourer, and there was little use for the capitalist without the labourer. We wanted the two. Even although the present Government was supposed to be a Labour Government, he was sure every member of that Government always endeavoured to put forth to the public the idea that the Government was going to act fairly to the capitalist. The special object of this department should be to assist commerce and labour. A great work was done in America in the commerce and labour bureau.

THE MINISTER: It cost a tremendous amount of money.

MR. GREGORY: Probably; but the information obtained was of wonderful value. He had some of the papers sent from that department, and they were

very useful. They gave us full reports not only in regard to labour in America, but in England, France, and other countries. Values were given, and industrial agreements that had been entered into. If we had a commercial and labour department, that would create a much better feeling than would exist by just having a department of labour.

MR. LYNCH: There were some States in America which had exclusively labour departments.

MR. GREGORY: They were exceptional.

MR. LYNCH: How about Colorado?

MR. GREGORY was prepared to lend the hon. member a couple of pamphlets.

MR. LYNCH could lend the hon. member some.

MR. GREGORY could lend a number of pamphlets which would show the statement the hon. member made was not correct. He had some pamphlets from the Bureau of Commerce and Labour in the United States.

MR. A. J. WILSON: Was not that a Federal department?

MR. GREGORY: Yes. But why could we not try to follow a good example? Such department as he advocated could send information throughout the world in regard to our timber resources and minerals, and all matters relating to commerce. These things could well be placed under the control of that department. He intended to move an amendment to insert the words "Commerce and" before "Labour." He wanted to get a promise in reference to an item regarding a fee paid to Mr. Ewing to attend at Kookynie. He did not want to discuss the item on the Estimates, but wished a promise that the matter should be the first Order of the Day for the next sitting.

MR. N. J. MOORE: The Premier had given that promise.

THE PREMIER: A month ago.

MR. GREGORY hoped there would be some promise that we should be able to discuss the matter. If we could not get a promise, he hardly knew what action we should take. He felt satisfied that if the Premier was going to make a statement the hon. gentleman would do his best to comply with this request. He wished to have some information in regard to the cost of reporting.

THE MINISTER: There were reporters in the Arbitration Court who acted as shorthand writers.

MR. GREGORY: It seemed a strange item. He did not want to know the exact amount; but he would like some idea. The only other matter he wished to speak about was in regard to this factory appointment. He believed for a long time we had had a lady inspector. He wished to know if any appointment had been made, and, if so, what the conditions regarding it were. He did not, however, desire an answer in regard to that question at present, because the matter could be dealt with on the items. He would like some explanation why the officer who had carried out the work for many years had been passed over.

THE PREMIER: The House would be afforded an opportunity of dealing with the Kookynie case and likewise the subject of the message from the Legislative Council embodied in a motion passed by that body. He could not, however, promise to put those items among the first business to-morrow, neither did he think the hon. member would wish him to do so, when he remembered that other business of this House had to go to another place for discussion. This having been dealt with in another place, it would, when we dealt with it, be finally disposed of.

MR. GREGORY: The Premier was quite right. He withdrew his request.

THE PREMIER was quite willing to stay till any time to afford an opportunity of discussing these questions.

MR. N. J. MOORE hoped the hon. member would not insist on the amendment with regard to making a department of commerce. Although we recognised the knowledge of the Minister in charge of the department as to labour matters, he did not know whether that member's experience of commerce would qualify him to control such a department as the member for Menzies had named.

MR. GREGORY: It was hoped to soon turn him out.

MR. N. J. MOORE: Perhaps that anticipation would not be realised at once. In regard to the Labour Bureau, doubtless this would be a branch in connection with any immigration scheme gone into. He thought that at present very

often information received in the old country did not coincide with fact. Immigrants who came here were often disappointed. A fortnight ago a man arrived in Perth with a letter of introduction from the Agent General (Mr. James), to the "Superintendent of Immigration." The immigrant was much surprised to find that there was no such officer. It would be well to advise our London representatives that the information they gave to intending immigrants should be as nearly as possible correct.

MR. A. J. WILSON: The onus of prosecuting in case of breach of arbitration awards was now thrown on the unions. Presumably the Government would make this the duty of inspectors. The benefits of the Factories and Early Closing Acts had been much restricted by the fact that only nominal fines were inflicted for offences. This applied particularly to the Early Closing Act. Inspectors complained that it was no use getting convictions, because the fine was a shilling for the first offence, and very little more for subsequent offences. The Minister should bring pressure to bear, so that the labours of the inspectors might not be rendered nugatory by inadequate fines. The department should publish a journal, like that of New Zealand, giving information on labour matters. The paper could be circulated not only here but in the Eastern States, and might prevent people coming here from the East in the vain hope of getting employment at trades already overcrowded. If this department provided salaries for officers of the Arbitration Court, the vote was totally inadequate. The department should be administered sympathetically. In all subsequent appointments there should be some guarantee that the officers appointed sympathised with this class of legislation.

MR. GREGORY moved an amendment:

That the words "Commerce and" be inserted before "Labour" in the title of the department.

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bath): In this matter there was no Standing Order to guide him; but presumably the same course was adopted with titles of departments as with titles of Bills. If anything inserted in a Bill was outside the scope of the title, the title had to be amended

accordingly; and presumably the converse was the case, that the title of a Bill could not be added to unless the addition was warranted by the contents of the Bill. In looking down the items under "Minister for Labour," he saw nothing which could be construed as commercial. There might be some justification for heading the department "Labour and Industries"; but "commerce" could hardly be inserted.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Item — Inspectors under Industrial Acts, £482:

MR. GREGORY: Had a lady inspector of factories been appointed?

THE MINISTER: No.

MR. F. F. WILSON: Was there in the Factories or the Arbitration Act any provision for enforcing the posting up in factories of any award relating to such factories? In Victoria the awards of wages boards were posted up in factories affected.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member's suggestion would be adopted in a future amendment of the Factories Act.

MR. TROY: Had the Minister made provision for an Arbitration Court library? The Judge had often drawn attention to this matter.

THE MINISTER: Some provision for an industrial library was made under "incidentals."

Item—Incidentals, £1,850:

MR. GREGORY: What was the cost of "reporting"?

THE MINISTER: The arrangements for reporting had been made by the late Attorney General, Mr. James. Last year the cost was £266; and for this financial year up to date, £148. For taking shorthand notes of every case the reporter received two guineas a sitting, and next day supplied to the court a typewritten copy of the whole of the evidence. For each extra copy he was paid 2d. per folio—a special rate fixed by Mr. James. It was intended next year to alter the system of taking shorthand notes. The expense was fairly heavy, and economies could be effected; but as the financial year was three months gone when the Government took office, it was considered inadvisable to alter the system. Such work must be well done. It was an important position,

but the money was spent in the right direction. Messrs. Bull & Hale, law reporters, were the reporters to the court.

MR. A. J. WILSON questioned whether there was so much necessity to have the notes taken in shorthand, or whether it facilitated the business of the court. The parties to the case had to pay for their reports of the evidence.

MR. LYNCH, having recently taken part in a case before the Arbitration Court lasting 10 days, thought the notes should be taken in shorthand. Otherwise this particular case might have lasted 30 days.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

This concluded the Estimates for the year (11:30 o'clock).

Grand total of Estimates, reduced to £2,978,306, put and passed.

Resolutions as passed in Committee of Supply reported, and the report adopted.

IN COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.

Resolution passed giving effect to the votes of Supply already agreed to, and granting the required amount out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

PERMANENT RESERVES REDEDICATION BILL (CLAREMONT.)

Received from the Legislative Council: first and second readings agreed to.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—Change of purpose of reserve:

THE PREMIER: The object of the Bill was to transfer to the Claremont municipal council the control of a small area of a public reserve for the erection of an electric power plant. There was ample land reserved in Claremont to meet the requirements of the district. This step would serve an important public service.

Clause passed.

Schedule, etc.—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL (FORESTRY).

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the previous day; the MINISTER FOR MINES in charge of the Bill.

MR. N. J. MOORE (Bunbury): As the Minister has intimated, this is not the comprehensive Bill that was looked for, but it is better than nothing at all. It is practically carrying out the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Forestry last year. Since last year the timber leases of the State have been practically closed up. Abolition of leases was decided upon during the last Parliament, and no fresh issues have been granted. We have a large area of forest land, and it is our duty to look after it; so I am glad the Ministry have decided, even at the last moment, to introduce this amending measure; but I trust one of the first measures next session will be a consolidating Forestry Bill. This present Bill does not go as far as I should like to see it go. In one respect the recommendation that the Forestry Department should be put under the control of some Minister other than the Minister for Lands is a good proposal. To have the two departments under the control of the one Minister is not in the interests of the Forestry Department. As was explained by the Minister, the Bill provides for the appointment of an inspector general together with an advisory board. It was considered advisable by the Forestry Commission that such a recommendation should be made, because possibly an inspector general might be appointed from outside the State, in which case it would be necessary to have power to appoint a board of persons with local knowledge to advise on the administration of the Act. It is my intention in Committee, when dealing with this clause, to suggest two definitions which I hope will be accepted, in reference to State forests and timber reserves: "State Forest" shall mean any area of Crown land vested in the Forestry Department, and whose area shall not be decreased, save by a special Act of Parliament; and "Forest Reserve" shall include all other land on which the Crown retains a right to timber growing therein or thereon, and all vacant Crown land on which forest trees are growing, have grown, or will grow. Under the present Act, there is no definition, and I think it is necessary that some definition should be made between State forests and timber

reserves. Provision is made in the Bill for regulations. It says:—

The Governor may by regulation prescribe that licenses to hew and fell timber for piles, poles, or balks shall be granted subject to the payment by the licensee of royalties proportional to the measurement of all piles, poles, and balks felled or hewn, in addition to or in lieu of the annual fee prescribed by the principal Act.

Under the present Act, by license, persons are entitled to go into a forest and fell as many piles as is possible within a month, for the sum of £3. It has been recognised by those interested in forestry matters that in some cases piles which are felled may be worth £3 or £4 a pile. The State simply gets a penny a foot royalty. I noticed in some cases piles which brought a revenue of £5 to the State were sent to South America, and the persons contracting for the supply of these piles secured as much as £15 for a single stick. I think the State should get something out of this magnificent asset of ours; and the board should have the right to regulate the price in proportion to the length of the pile. If a pile is 20 feet long, instead of as at present a royalty of one penny a foot being charged, a larger royalty should be paid. The 20 feet pile would return 1s. 8d. to the State, and the 60 feet pile, 5s. A short pile would be worth 20d. and a long pile would be worth £1 or £2. There should be some provision to empower the board to use their discretion in dealing with this asset. I do not propose, considering the time, to deal with this matter at any length. I submit, in connection with this great asset, it is our duty to look beyond the exigencies of the present by conserving the forest wealth of our land, to provide for those who follow us. It is our duty to guard and nurse our forest reserves, to secure, as far as possible, their regeneration, to foster their development, and leave them to those who succeed us in as prosperous a state as possible. I trust the Bill will go through Committee.

[12 o'clock, midnight.]

MR. A. J. WILSON (Forrest): I desire to say a few words on this Bill; and I am in thorough accord with the share of relief it gives in the existing state of affairs. I recognise that, in the lateness of the session, it is impossible

for us to deal with a thoroughly comprehensive Bill, and carry such a Bill through both Houses this session. The Bill before us introduces a change which I think the experience we have had in this State justifies, together with the experience that has obtained in other parts of the world, in the administration of forests. We have in this State undoubtedly very extensive areas; but the powers in this State in regard to the matter are very limited; much more so than they have a right to be, in the best interests of the industry and the State. By the alteration proposed, the Government will be in a position to open up a larger area of forest. There is a wise provision enabling the Government to construct railways and tramways, to connect suitable lines with the main trunk system of the State. I have no doubt that the provision for the appointment of an advisory board will overcome the difficulties likely to eventuate if a person were appointed as Inspector General, having most excellent qualifications as a surveyor, but with little or no knowledge of the local habits and condition of the forest lands of the State. I hope, as far as the board is concerned, in the appointment of the members to that board the Government will take into consideration the claims of the workers employed in the industry. I think a representative should be appointed to the board who can be depended on, from his association with the interests of the workers in the industry, to place before the board the side of the question as it affects the industrial workers. I am sure it is only a fair and reasonable request that the men should be taken into consideration. There is great difficulty in dealing with various lands, and we cannot very conveniently lay down any hard and fast statutory principles in connection with the administration, for in various localities, in a good year, the conditions under which operations have to be carried on must necessarily vary, and the necessity arises for having a certain amount of elastic statutory powers, always provided that the regulations may be framed on certain recommendations such as will safeguard the interests of those in the industry of the State. I am pleased to see it is proposed to curtail the granting of any farther leases. I think the grant-

ing of leases in the past has been most unfortunate for the State. We find to-day enormous tracts of admirable forest land, within reasonable proximity to railway communication, locked up, held in possession and not used, and what is worse than that there are mills being erected on small areas, practically dummy mills, for the purpose of holding areas of land by conforming with indefinite clauses of the present Land Act. This is being done on an area in the vicinity of Pinjarra, and I think it is evident that the thing is really not a very legitimate project, when it is proposed to put down a mill on an area of forest country to cut timber, and no provision is made to put down a line to bring the produce a distance of 12 miles to the main trunk line. Timber is a very hard thing to profitably convey over any distance, even with favourable railway facilities. I do not know if the Bill will make provision to deal with leases of that kind. If it does not, I shall ask the Minister to consider the advisability of providing the administrator of the department with the necessary power to deal with contingencies that arise under that heading. The board will also be in a position to recommend that certain areas should be set apart exclusively for timber hewers and others, for the use of people who desire to work small mills thereon and conduct a business. I appreciate the action of the Government in bringing down the Bill at this late hour of the session, and I hope it will have a safe passage through this Chamber, and successfully negotiate another place; so that, if the measure is placed on the statute book, we shall have full benefit and advantage from it during the coming year.

MR. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): I do not wish to detain the House to-night in discussing the matter fully, but I hardly like the Bill to pass through without some short comment on my part. I agree with the members who have spoken, that the present state of affairs should be ended. We have a valuable asset, and in order that it should be profitable to the State and the inhabitants of the State, we should do something to open it up and place the matured timbers on the markets of the world. There is no use leaving the timber in the forests to look at, for it will gradually wear away

as years roll by. There are hundreds and thousands of matured trees in the jarrah and karri forests that ought to be worked up in the market, and make employment for hundreds and thousands of men to-day. I am pleased to see anything which will have a tendency to bring that about. There is a sort of innovation in the Bill. A board of three persons is to be appointed, to assist in advising the Minister and the Inspector General of Forests. Boards, as a rule, are not satisfactory, unless we get the proper persons appointed; persons who have the necessary knowledge and experience to give valuable advice and assistance. That is the only danger I fear. Still, I am inclined to commend the Minister for having inserted a provision of this sort, in order that we may, if possible, get the right sort of people on the board to give the necessary advice and assistance. With the member for Forrest, I agree that the great body of workers engaged in the industry should have some representation on a board of this description. Their interests are directly with the interests of the mill owners, to see that the best use is made of our forests. I can think of no better plan than to have representatives from both classes on that board—a representative of the workers and a representative of the mill owners, and a third person appointed with some special knowledge and ability in regard to forests, by the Government. If that be carried out, perhaps we may have a workable board. I am inclined to agree that the system of leasing our forest lands has not been as beneficial as it ought to have been to the State. If we can overcome that by this little Bill, I trust that both Houses will be able to pass the measure right through to-morrow, and that it will be acted upon at once. There are some matters in the different clauses which will perhaps require attention. There is one which seems to be rather arbitrary; that which provides that every permit shall be liable to forfeiture in the event of the mill being closed for a period of one month without the consent of the Governor. I presume that no action of that description will be taken except with the advice of the board, after due inquiry. There is a matter which the member for Bunbury referred

to, with regard to differential rates. But all these are matters of detail which I think can be properly worked out when we get into Committee. Some of them will be matters for regulation. I join with other members in congratulating the Government on having introduced the Bill, late though it is, and I hope we shall be able to put it through.

MR. E. P. HENSHAW (Collie): I wish to say a word or two in regard to this matter. I hope the measure will be passed through without any serious amendment. To my mind it meets the necessities of the moment, and I hope that next session we shall have a Bill dealing more fully with the subject. Will this Bill enable the Minister to place that land cut out into a reserve? I want to see it determined that as soon as a piece of land is cut out it shall once more become a reserve; that no cutting will be allowed on that ground until such time as it is reforested.

MR. FRANK WILSON: Yes; there is full power in Clause 9.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. BATH in the Chair.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Duties of Inspector General:

MR. N. J. MOORE moved:

That after "conservation" the word "creation" be inserted.

This would give the necessary power if it were wished to go in for any planting.

MR. FRANK WILSON did not think the word "creation" conveyed the proper meaning. We could not create a forest. Under Clause 16 the Governor could make regulations for the planting of trees and for the renewal of forests. Surely that gave all the power wanted.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Sussex had called attention to the fact that power was given as to the planting of trees. It appeared that the word "conservation" covered the matter, otherwise he would be in favour of the amendment.

MR. A. J. WILSON thought the point referred to by the member for Sussex was covered by the words "management and control of State forests." He took it that the advisory board would make

recommendations in cases of the kind referred to.

MR. MOORE did not wish to press the amendment, especially as he was assured that any amendment would necessitate a reprinting of the Bill. He found that Subclause 10 of Clause 16 contained the necessary provision for the planting of trees. He begged to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment withdrawn, and the clause passed.

Clauses 4 to 19—agreed to.

Clause 20—Power to arrest trespassers:

MR. MOORE moved an amendment:

That the words "police officer or" be inserted after "any."

It was necessary that a police officer should have the same power as an officer of the Department of Lands and Surveys.

MR. F. F. WILSON thought the difficulty could be got over without altering the clause. This could be done by the appointment of police officers in the various districts as assistant Crown rangers or something of the kind.

THE MINISTER: Unless the member for Bunbury could absolutely assure him that the power did not already exist, he would not advise that the Bill should be changed in that way.

MR. LYNCH believed the police officers were doing such work at present around Perth.

MR. MOORE did not think a police officer had power to do this work, and he was not of opinion that the amendment would necessitate a reprinting of the Bill. However, rather than jeopardise the Bill, he would withdraw the amendment.

MR. A. J. WILSON suggested that the clause should be passed as it stood at present, and if it were necessary to make an alteration, that could be effected when the Bill was in the other Chamber.

MR. FRANK WILSON: There were not many police officers in the forest districts. Officers could be appointed under the Lands Department as rangers or something of that sort.

MR. RASON suggested that the amendment should be withdrawn, for if it were adopted that would necessitate a reprinting of the Bill, and might possibly imperil the passage of the measure.

Amendment withdrawn, and the clause passed.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

LOCAL INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

INSPECTION OF MACHINERY BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of four amendments insisted on by the Legislative Council now farther considered in Committee; the MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. R. Hastie) in charge of the Bill.

No. 4—Clause 16, Subclause (2), strike out the whole paragraph (b):

THE MINISTER: The session was so near its close that we must either agree to these amendments or lose the Bill. He moved that the amendment be agreed to.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 5—agreed to.

No. 12—Clause 64 (Boiler attendants' certificates), strike out the whole:

THE MINISTER moved that the Council's amendment be agreed to.

MR. P. J. LYNCH: The clause was the most important provision in the Bill; and as we had already given way 10 times out of 15, we were justified in making a stand here. It was plain that another place wished to become the paramount House. This clause was simply a development of the Mines Regulation Bill. He protested against a condition of things bordering on the intolerable.

MR. SCADDAN: Another place thought certificated boiler attendants unnecessary. Certain members of another place told him that when considering the Bill they thought that boiler attendants were boiler-makers' assistants. The Minister in another place was not properly instructed, or he could have explained this clause, of which the object was to

place responsibility on the fireman in charge of a nest of boilers situated at a distance from the engine-driver.

MR. FRANK WILSON disagreed with the preceding speaker. In Clause 69, proposed to be struck out, there was a clear explanation of "boiler attendant," which must have been understood in another place.

MR. NEEDHAM: One of the most important clauses in the Bill was rejected by another place, despite the advice of practical men. The amendment should not be agreed to. Of what use was the Bill without one of its principal safeguards?

MR. A. J. WILSON: While not approving of the amendment, he would not sacrifice the whole Bill for the sake of one clause. Members must not forget the possibility of the House meeting again in six months' time. In the meantime they might educate members in another place in regard to the wisdom of adopting the clause. It would be easier to carry an amendment when the Act was in force.

THE PREMIER: Members were under a mistake when they attributed the opposition of the Council to want of knowledge. In the first discussion on this clause in another place, it was clearly shown that members knew the purpose of the clause. If members wished to pass the Bill there were two courses open—to arrange a conference, or accept the Council's amendment. There were other clauses in the Bill which were valuable.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 13 (strike out Clause 69)—agreed to.

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

LOCAL COURTS BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of three amendments insisted on by the Council now farther considered in Committee.

No. 3—Clause 29, strike out the last paragraph:

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Members would recollect how this clause was discussed previously. The majority of the Council's amendments had not

been insisted on; and owing to the lateness of the session, rather than kill the measure he moved that the amendment be agreed to.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4—agreed to.

No. 8—agreed to.

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

PRIVATE BILL—KALGOORLIE AND BOULDER RACING CLUBS.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of five amendments made by the Council now considered in Committee; Mr. RASON in charge of the Bill.

No. 1—Clause 16, Subclause (e), strike out the words after "racecourse":

MR. RASON: The amendments made by the Council were in reference to clauses amplifying the power to make by-laws. He moved that the amendment be agreed to.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

Other amendments agreed to.

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

DISTRESS FOR RENT RESTRICTION BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered in Committee; Mr. A. J. WILSON in charge of the Bill.

No. 1—Clause 2, Subclause 1, strike out "piano" in lines 2 and 5, and the words "one piano" in line 7:

MR. A. J. WILSON moved that the amendment be agreed to.

MR. RASON was surprised at the member for Forrest, also at members of another place, in wishing to exclude a piano from the articles exempted from seizure. However, he would not oppose the motion.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2—Clause 2, strike out Subclause (2):

MR. A. J. WILSON: The object of striking out the subclause was for the

purpose of adding in lieu a clause which was placed in the Local Courts Bill, applying to the exemption of certain goods from execution under a judgment of the Local Court. This was a good addition to the Bill, exempting a certain number of things which, under the clause as it appeared in the Bill, would not be exempted. He moved:

That the amendment be agreed to.

MR. NEEDHAM opposed the amendment. Five pounds for tools of trade was a very small amount. An ordinary kit of tools would cost ten, twelve, or fifteen pounds to purchase; and if we took any portion of that kit away, the kit itself was rendered useless.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	19
Noes	...	...	...	6
Majority for				13

AYES.
Mr. Bolton
Mr. Carson
Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Duglish
Mr. Hastie
Mr. Henshaw
Mr. Holman
Mr. Horan
Mr. Isdell
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Keyser
Mr. Lynch
Mr. Nelson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Troy
Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. F. F. Wilson
Mr. Gill (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Burgess
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Needham
Mr. Rason
Mr. Frank Wilson
Mr. Diamond (Teller).

Question thus passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3—Add the following as Clause 3:

From and after the passing of this Act the following goods and chattels shall also be exempt from distress for rent, namely any goods or chattels of the tenant or his family which would be protected from seizure in execution under Section 126 of the Local Courts Act 1904, or any enactment amending or substituted for the same.

MR. A. J. WILSON moved that the amendment be agreed to. It was a similar clause to that contained in the Local Courts Bill.

Question passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

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

BILLS OF EXCHANGE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. H. Daglish), in moving the second reading, said: This is not one of the Bills which I announced last night that I proposed to proceed with; but it is a very short Bill, and of a purely formal nature, intended to correct an error recently discovered to exist in the main Act. The object of the Bill is to facilitate the transaction of ordinary commercial and banking business, and to carry out the purpose it was thought the original Act carried out. The amendment is introduced at the request of the associated banks, and is precisely the same as an Act that has been passed this session in the adjoining States of Victoria and South Australia. The original Act did not carry the meaning it will carry when the Bill is passed; and this amendment has been rendered necessary by a decision of the Supreme Court in Great Britain. I do not propose, at this stage, to go into detailed explanation, but if members wish it, I shall be glad to do so in Committee.

MR. H. C. RASON (Guildford): I support the second reading, and am obliged to the Premier for bringing the Bill on this evening. I can give to the House this assurance, that if the Bill be passed it will confer on the banking institutions no power other than that which has been exercised for years past. The custom has been to act as is set out in the Bill. No one here has ever questioned the practice, and I do not suppose anyone ever will; but in view of the decision given in the mother country, it is well we should have an enactment here making it clear that the custom that has obtained in the past will be the custom in the future.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until 10:30 a.m.

(Friday). He asked members to come prepared to deal with the Loan Bill and the Loan Estimates, which would be the first items on the Notice Paper. No doubt we would be able to conclude the business and arrange for prorogation on the following day. He thought members were anxious to assist for this purpose, and he had to thank them personally for the amount of time they had given to the sittings to-day, yesterday, and the preceding day.

Question passed.

The House adjourned at seventeen minutes past 1 o'clock a.m., until 10:30 Friday forenoon.

Legislative Council,

Friday, 23rd December, 1904.

	PAGE
Standing Orders Suspension	2230
Motion: Fires in Agricultural Districts, Collie	
Coal, debate concluded	2238
Bills: Local Inscribed Stock Act Amendment, all stages	2231
Land Act Amendment (Forestry), all stages	2232
Third readings: 1 Navigation; 2, North Fremantle Streets Dedication	2238
Agricultural Bank Act Amendment, second reading, etc.	2240
Post Office Savings Bank Act Amendment, second reading negatived	2240
Brands, second reading, in Committee, etc.	2245
Loan (£750,000), all stages	2247
Appropriation, all stages	2252

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

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Amendment of regulation under the Mining Act 1904.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew) moved:

That, in order to expedite business, the Standing Orders relating to the passing of public Bills and the consideration of Messages