

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 12 o'clock midnight, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 10th October, 1906.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—SHOPPING HOURS, KALGOORLIE.

MR. WALKER asked the Premier: 1, Is it true that permits have been granted to certain employers in Kalgoorlie to open their shops during the evening, after the statutory hour of closing? 2, If so, who granted the permits, and under what section of the Act were they granted? 3, Was the Minister consulted? 4, Are not such grants *ultra vires*? 5, Has the Government abandoned the appeal to the Full Court in September 1905 (see inspector's report published this year)? 6, Will the Government appoint an inspector for the gold-fields, or gazette certain police officers to do the work?

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Yes; Messrs. Brennan Bros., Boulder, for the purpose of holding show of goods on

Wednesday, 19th September, 1906 between 7:30 and 10 p.m., conditionally that no assistants employed and no trading done. Police asked to visit and see conditions complied with. 2, Chief Inspector of Factories. The Act makes no provision. See answer to No. 4. 3, Yes. 4, No, it being held by the Crown Solicitor that under the conditions above stated the shop is closed within the meaning of the Act—not being open for the purpose of trade. 5, No. Appeal upheld by Full Court decision 23rd March, 1906. 6, The police at present exercise a general superintendence over early-closing matters, and, in addition, a visit is paid by one of the early-closing inspectors as frequently as circumstances will permit.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, METROPOLITAN SCHEME.

MR. H. BROWN asked the Minister for Works: When does the Government purpose putting in hand the proposed enlarged water scheme for the metropolitan area, as promised last year by the Hon. Frank Wilson?

THE PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied: Preliminary investigations are now being made, and as soon as complete information has been obtained the Government will make an announcement.

MOTION—POLICE FORCE, SUNDAY OFF.

MR. E. HEITMANN (Cue) moved—

That in the opinion of this House the members of the Police Force throughout the State should have one Sunday, or its equivalent per month as a day of rest and recreation without prejudice to any of their present privileges.

He said: I move the motion with a desire to give a large body of men in the public service of this State a concession or rather a privilege, if it may be termed so, which is at present enjoyed by the public service outside this one department throughout the State. At the present time in the large centres of Western Australia many of our constables in the Police Force are working 365 days a year. I think the House will agree with me that causing men to work 365 days a year, year in and year out, in some of the centres of this State, is no

at all conducive to the good conduct and discipline of the Police Department. I also think the House will agree with me that in the Police Force in this State we have a body of men who, from a physical standpoint and also from the standpoint of their general conduct, will compare favourably with the police departments in any of the States of Australia. It is my desire to see that these men shall have some little time to themselves by way of recreation; that they shall have at least one day a month which they can wholly call their own. As I say, there are at the present time some of them at least working every day in the year, although we know that by the regulations they are entitled to 21 days' annual leave; but at the same time there is in the regulations a proviso that they shall have it if they can be spared by their superior officers. When regulations are surrounded by conditions such as these, it often depends upon the relations existing between the officer and his subordinate whether or not one shall get his holiday, and I want to make the position of things different from that. I think it is not only a privilege they should have, but a right they should expect from their employers the Government, as well as the officers and the men in the various other departments in this State. Not only do many of the police work continually during the year, but at times of festivity and public amusement they often work longer hours without extra remuneration, while at other times also the police constable is often called on to do extra work, especially when on night duty. All who understand the conditions know that if a constable on night duty has a case during the night, he completes his shift and next day has to attend the court. I understand that some of our constables have a half-holiday on Sundays, but such half-holidays are very intermittent, and I wish to alter the regulations so that they may know exactly when they will have a day off, so that they may leave duty on Saturday night knowing that they will not be called on, except for special duty, till Monday morning. The police who are on night duty cannot get the half-day on Sunday, for the simple reason that they work during the night. As to the 21 days' annual leave, many of the con-

stables have to work for 18 months or two years without a holiday of any sort. I think this is decidedly unfair; for if we have a body of police prepared to do its duty—and I think that our police force compares favourably with that in any other State—we should treat the police as we treat other public servants. If a constable goes without his leave for one year either at his own request or by direction of his superior officer, his leave is not allowed to accumulate, but he loses it, and is fortunate if he gets three weeks during the next 12 months. Some few years ago I believe the Colonial Secretary was approached by the then member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) in reference to this matter, and the Minister consented to allow members of the police force to have one clear Sunday per month. This concession was granted for about one month in some parts of the State; but throughout the country the old system was soon re-established, and now not one constable, I am informed, has his full monthly holiday during the year, unless he is fortunate enough to get his three weeks' leave. I do not think it altogether right that the granting of holidays should be entirely optional with the superior officers. I am well aware there are occasions when it is impossible to give a constable a holiday on a particular Sunday; but he could probably be given it on the next Sunday. To small places out back the motion will not be so fully applicable; for one constable in a small place practically regulates his own time, and where there are two or more they can I am sure arrange among themselves to allow one man to go off duty and enjoy himself with the knowledge that he will not be wanted till next day. The proposal to give constables one holiday a month will I think commend itself to the House. The police are not over-paid. We find constables with families working for 7s. 6d. and 8s. a day; and in many cases this is not altogether creditable to their superior officers. At the same time I am not complaining of the wage paid; but I wish to see the police granted one holiday per month, without giving their superior officers power to cancel the holiday.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH: (West Perth): I have pleasure in seconding this

motion. Those members who were present in the old House will recollect that this matter was a constant grievance with me year after year, until I received a distinct assurance from the department that the holiday would be granted. Until now I never heard that it was discontinued. I am sorry to hear of its discontinuance, and I hope the promise which was then made will be renewed by the present Government. It seems to me altogether out of place to ask men to work 365 day in the year. At least once in a month a day off should be granted. The present system is not fair to the policeman, it is not fair to his family, nor is it fair to the public. I therefore hope that the Ministry will give serious consideration to this motion, and that it will be supported by the House and passed.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) : I think we all agree with the mover, that in the body of men who comprise the constabulary of Western Australia we have a force of which we may well be proud; but the mover is somewhat in error in stating that the members of the police force work 365 days in the year.

MR. HEITMANN : I said in some cases.

THE PREMIER : He afterwards qualified the statement. In his opening remarks he stated it was not fair that men should have to work 365 days in the year. I would draw attention to No. 343 of the Police Regulations, which provides that—

Except in the case of men stationed in very remote districts or localities, who will be allowed one month's leave on full pay, all subofficers and constables will be granted leave of absence for a period not exceeding 21 days on full pay during the course of each calendar year, provided the exigencies of the service permit of their absents themselves from duty without inconvenience to the department.

MR. HEITMANN : That is where the trouble comes in.

THE PREMIER : There is great difficulty in granting such leave in outlying districts where there are only one or two policemen. If the only policeman in the districts took his day off, the police force would not be represented there on that particular Sunday.

MR. HEITMANN : In a small place a man is practically his own boss, and can take a holiday when he chooses.

THE PREMIER : But I understand that in larger places the constables on beat duty receive half a day on each Sunday.

MR. HEITMANN : It is not so. I should like to inform you that only five constables in the police force around Perth had half a day off recently.

THE PREMIER : I am speaking from information received, not having had an opportunity of investigating the question else I should have asked for an adjournment of the debate. I am informed that constables doing other than beat duty are allowed half a day every second Sunday. That appears to be the regulation in force; and it should be understood that every constable who performs eight hours duty during the day has 16 hours off; and I understand that regulation is enforced so far as the exigencies of the service will allow. We must recognise that the police are not in the same position as the employees of an industrial concern. All we can do is to suit the men's holidays to the exigencies of the situation; and I am not prepared to accept the motion until I have some farther information. The member for West Perth has stated that during his regime as Colonial Secretary he recommended that this proposal be adopted but so far as I can see, it cannot possibly be carried out in its entirety, although it is as well that the Government should have an expression of opinion from the House. At the same time I may point out that if this motion be carried it will probably entail the enrolling of considerably more policemen. [**MR. HEITMANN** : No.] I think it will not entail additional enrolment and additional expense, I cannot see very great objection to the motion.

MR. J. E. HARDWICK : In regard to the remarks of the member for Cue, I am anxious to obtain more information. I move that the debate be adjourned.

MR. HEITMANN : Why adjourn? This has been on the Notice Paper for three weeks.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	12
Majority for ...				3

AYES.

Mr. Brebber
Mr. Butcher
Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Davies
Mr. Ewing
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Johnson
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Monger
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Price
Mr. Smith
Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Bolton
Mr. Collier
Mr. Daglish
Mr. Eddy
Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Horn
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Walker
Mr. Ware
Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. Troy (Teller).

Motion thus passed, the debate adjourned.

MOTION—RAILWAYS CONTROL BY A MINISTER.

Debate resumed from 3rd October, on the motion by Mr. Ewing to revert to Ministerial control of the railway system.

MR. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) : With the exception of the speech delivered by the member for Kanowna, I do not think a great deal has been said on the relative merits of Ministerial control as against Commissioner control of our railway system. The mover of the motion practically directed all his remarks towards his want of confidence in the present Commissioner of Railways. His discussion was more want of confidence in the Commissioner than in the system of Commissioner control; and in his concluding remarks I believe he emphasised this point when he used the words, "If members believe in Mr. George and Commissioner control."

MR. EWING: No.

MR. JOHNSON: That is how it appeared, and that is how the hon. member delivered it. I made a note at the time.

MR. EWING: It is not in *Hansard*.

MR. JOHNSON: At any rate I regret that the hon. member devoted so much attention to the present Commissioner of Railways, Mr. George. He criticised to a great extent the administration of that gentleman, and he did not go to any great extent into the relative merits of the systems. Then we had the Minister for Railways following the speech of the member for Collie. Consequently the hon. gentleman was forced to take up the same line of argument as was introduced by the mover of the motion. The Minister's reply was therefore combating the criticisms on the administration

of Mr. George, rather than trying to defend the system of Commissioner control.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You must remember that we have had only one Commissioner.

MR. JOHNSON: What I desire to emphasise is that had the member for Collie adopted a different attitude, and a more desirable attitude in my opinion, that of criticising the relative merits of the two systems, then it would have been for the Minister to either defend one or to agree to the other; but we find that the mover of the motion criticised the Commissioner, and it was then necessary for the Minister to defend the Commissioner rather than to defend the system of Commissioner control. The member for Collie gave us a great number of figures in order to try to prove that the railways during the term of the Commissioner had not been so successful as they had been previously under Ministerial control. I am not going to follow the hon. member in my support of his motion in trying to prove by figures that the one system is better than the other, because we find that figures on all occasions can be quoted to prove anything. On the one hand we have the hon. member quoting figures to prove that Mr. George's term was not successful, and on the other hand we have the Minister quoting figures to prove absolutely the reverse. Apart from the fact that I am influenced by a desire to keep away from figures because we have these two hon. members endeavouring to justify different positions by quoting them, I am also influenced to keep away from them because of the fact that we find in the Auditor General's report that he states:—

The success or failure of the working of our railways has not yet been presented to Parliament. Statements have been presented which show approximately the result of the undertaking.

We find that the Auditor General cannot from the figures available speak definitely to this House as to the success or otherwise of this undertaking; and when we find that the Auditor General is unable to say that a correct statement has been presented to Parliament, it is utterly impossible for the member for Collie or even the Minister to urge or to defend the position by quoting figures.

The Auditor General cannot do it, and it is impossible for hon. members to do it on their part.

MR. EWING: The Auditor General was only referring to one year.

MR. JOHNSON: I do not intend, in my support of this motion, to quote any figures; neither do I intend to criticise the present Commissioner of Railways. I intend, as far as my abilities will allow me, to try and bring forward arguments against Commissioner control, and to endeavour to convince the House that it is desirable we should revert to the old system of Ministerial control. There is one little point though in connection with the quoting of figures in relation to the railway system. It must be borne in mind that outside influences have a direct bearing on railway revenue. The hon. member for Collie pointed that out when he stated that the completion of the Goldfields Water Scheme to a very large extent increased the revenue of the railway system; and on the other hand the Minister took the stand that, owing to the working railways having lost control of the harbour works, they lost revenue. Therefore, we have outside influences quoted on the one hand to show that there has been a loss of revenue through losing something; and on the other hand that the railways have gained revenue by having gained something. Hence it is impossible to my mind to try and make out a case by quoting figures. But before dealing with the main question, I desire to endeavour to clear up some misunderstandings that evidently exist in connection with the Armadale duplication. We have had the Armadale duplication drawn into this debate, and we have also had the Fremantle Railway station introduced. I will endeavour to give my side of the questions. I gave some little attention to them when I was—for ten minutes as the Minister often points out—Minister for Railways. The Armadale duplication was, as the Minister has pointed out, agreed to by the Minister, and it is provided in the Railways Act that all expenditure must be approved by the Minister. It is true that the Minister did approve of the expenditure on the Armadale duplication. But the fact remains that he did not approve, so far as I could gather, of that expenditure until the Armadale duplication had been

actually started, as I found while I was Minister for Railways. I will give another instance in which a similar case occurred, in connection with the erection of the Perth railway offices. The member for Perth (Mr. H. Brown) will remember that case, and other members also will remember that a start was made to erect offices outside the present railway station buildings. A huge outcry was made in Perth and public meetings were held, and when the protest was made, we remember that the Minister for Railways, Mr. Rason—he had just left office—stated he had not approved of that work being undertaken. But we found, after making inquiries, that he had actually approved. Why was he mistaken in this? He was mistaken through the system that prevailed in connection with railway expenditure. In this case the position was exactly as it was in connection with the Armadale duplication. Until I took over the administration of the Railway Department a system was in vogue of the Commissioner undertaking work, and then coming along with a statement that so-and-so has been started, this has been done here and that done there—kindly approve. The work was actually started before approval was given; and when in conversation with Mr. George as to the methods of carrying on the railway administration this was pointed out to me, I told him I could not possibly agree to a continuation of that system. I told him that an Act of Parliament called upon me as Minister to approve expenditure, and I could not approve of expenditure on works that had already been started. The Commissioner rightly pointed out that it would be very difficult—in fact he questioned whether it was possible—to carry on the railway system without methods of that description. He tried to argue that it was impossible to carry on the work if it was necessary to go to the Minister and get approval before he could undertake the work. We compromised the matter, and I am glad to see, according to his speech, that the Minister is continuing the practice then introduced. I stated that I would have to approve of expenditure on big works, but in small matters—in which it was pointed out by the Commissioner that when he went say down the Great Southern line, and was con-

vinced by the people of the district that a siding or some other little matters were necessary in connection with the railway system, it was necessary for him to consent to the work on the spot and perhaps to put the work in hand at once—I agreed that in such circumstances it would be justifiable on the part of the Commissioner to anticipate approval. But we limited this to a certain amount, and the Minister points out in his speech that this arrangement still prevails. But it did not prevail at the outset. From what I can gather, the system in force previously was that the work was actually undertaken by the Commissioner, and a statement was submitted every month asking the Minister to kindly approve of certain works which had been started. I cannot now be absolutely certain, but I think the position in the case of the Perth railway offices was that the work was actually in progress and approval given afterwards; but no doubt the Minister knows it to be a fact that in the case of the Armadale duplication the work was actually started before approval was asked for.

MR. DAGLISH: That was not so in the case of the Perth railway offices.

MR. TAYLOR: The Perth railway offices were approved before a start was made.

MR. JOHNSON: So far as my memory serves me it was started before the plans were ready. However, the Minister did not actually know that he had approved of the starting of that work. That was demonstrated when he stated that he had never approved of it, and it was afterwards brought out that he had signed some approval. The point I desire to make is that there was not a great deal of attention given to railway administration as far as the Minister was concerned, as to the expenditure from loan fund or revenue fund. I am rather inclined to think that was the case, because I am satisfied that there was no justification for the Armadale duplication at the time that work was carried out, and the fact remains that it is not justified to-day. The line is not used to that extent to-day which would justify its construction, and we know that it has now been laid down for some years. Consequently, while I am satisfied the Armadale duplication was not necessary, I am convinced it

was started more by the Commissioner than by Ministerial approval. Let us come now to the Fremantle railway station. It has been stated throughout the country by the Minister for Railways that the Labour Government were responsible for this work. When the Minister goes to Fremantle, however, he forgets to give credit to the Labour Government for having started the work; but when he gets to Menzies, the Minister slates the Labour Government for having spent the huge sum of £80,000 on a railway station at Fremantle. The same position obtained in connection with that work. The Minister stated the other night that the work had not been started until Mr. Johnson, the then Minister, had approved of the expenditure; but he forgot to point out the actual fact that Mr. Johnson did not approve of the expenditure, but rather that Parliament approved of it—it came down on the Estimates, £80,000 for the construction of a railway station at Fremantle. Yet the Minister would have the House and the country to understand that the work was started on Mr. Johnson's approval rather than on that of Parliament.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You are not quite fair. The member for Collie was charging the Commissioner with doing this work, and I merely pointed out that this was done by your Government and that you yourself had approved of it.

MR. JOHNSON: Perhaps I was not fair, but if so the Minister also was not fair to me.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Does the hon. member argue that he was not responsible for the approval of the present plans?

MR. JOHNSON: I will come to that presently. The position is that the Labour Government provided on the Estimates a sum of £80,000 for the construction of the Fremantle railway station; but the fact remains that the previous Administration had practically agreed to that sum of money being placed on the Estimates; they practically authorised and agreed to the construction of the Fremantle railway station. That is demonstrated by the fact that a purchase of land was made for the purpose of building the Fremantle

railway station—the secret purchase of land was undertaken by the previous Administration for the purpose of erecting this railway station upon, and the Working Railways Department were given to understand that a sum of money would be provided for the erection of the station. It is true we provided that sum; but we did not start the movement for the construction of the station in fact, because the land had been purchased by the previous Administration, the Working Railways Department being given to understand that the work would be gone on with. We merely came along and took up the position at which the matter had been left by the previous Administration.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I want to point out that the passing of the money by the House did not give the Commissioner the right to spend the money.

MR. JOHNSON: As far as I was concerned, it would not give him that right.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But did he start before the item was passed?

MR. JOHNSON: Let me go a little farther. The Minister points out that I approved of an expenditure of £80,000 and that he reduced it afterwards. In this the Minister was not quite fair. It is true that I approved of the sum for the Fremantle railway station; but I was dissatisfied with the plans, and I was in this position—and the Minister for Railways will always be in this position so long as we have our present system of Commissioner control—that I disagreed with those plans. I was dissatisfied with them, and to-day I am dissatisfied. The position was that I as Minister was opposed to the ideas of the Commissioner, and the Commissioner's ideas were backed up and supported by the engineers of the Working Railways Department. On the one hand you have the Minister who was not a practical man, not a man who understands working railways, and on the other hand you have the Commissioner of Railways who at any rate had the engineers behind him supporting the plans. I endeavoured on several occasions to convince them that there was no need to utilise so much land in connection with the erection of the buildings. I wanted to see Market Street go right

across to the wharves and utilise the land for other purposes.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You did not try very hard to carry your point.

MR. JOHNSON: I differ from the Minister for Works. No one tried harder than I did to do that; but the difficult part of the matter was that the Commissioner, under a certain section of the Act, is given the sole management of the railways, and immediately you come into conflict with the Commissioner he can quote—I do not say that he did so in this instance—but the Commissioner can turn round and tell you that he has the sole management of the railways, and it is difficult to say where his sole management begins and ends.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Section 16 of the Railways Act only refers to the working of the railways.

MR. JOHNSON: That section gives the Commissioner the sole management, and it is difficult to know where the "sole management" begins.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But you had to find the money.

MR. JOHNSON: I had to find the money. I disagreed with the first plans submitted to me, the estimate for which was something over £100,000.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think £98,000.

MR. JOHNSON: Then a definite plan—the other was only a rough estimate—was prepared, the estimate for which ran into some £98,000.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Was that it? I remember the £98,000.

MR. JOHNSON: Then I set to work to reduce this. My idea was to cut the estimate down to £80,000, and it was a fairly easy matter to cut it down to that amount. I simply had to say that Parliament had voted only £80,000 and it was beyond my power or my right to agree to plans which would cost more than the sum voted by Parliament. But the Minister would like the House to believe that I had actually approved of those plans, and that I had finished with the question when the estimate was brought down to £80,000. That was not so. I disagreed with the proposal as to the dome in connection with the building. I never raised the question of the dome until getting the other work down to

£80,000, and it was then my intention to start on the dome after I had reduced the charge for the construction of the building itself. I was fighting in relation to the yards. It was my intention when I got that down, to start on the dome to reduce the estimate below £30,000. I am pleased to know that the Minister agreed with that, and that he has cut out that dome, which was absolutely unnecessary; and I believe the expenditure is reduced below £80,000. Members will see that when it is urged that the Labour Government agreed to the expenditure of £80,000 and they started the Fremantle railway station, that is not altogether correct, because it was really started by our predecessors, and we carried it along. Then when it was stated I agreed to an expenditure of £80,000, the Minister tried to get a lot of virtue out of the fact that he reduced the amount. That is hardly fair, inasmuch as the matter was not completed when I handed it over.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I give you all credit for the work. You did authorise the expenditure of £80,000, and there is a record of it.

MR. JOHNSON: That is so. That was the vote of Parliament. However, I raised these points because they had been raised in discussion. The member for Collie devoted considerable attention to them, as did also the Minister in his reply.

MR. EWING: What about the Engineer-in-Chief's scheme?

MR. JOHNSON: I studied that as Minister for Works. That was the scheme of Mr. Bell, engineer for harbours and rivers, and there is no doubt the scheme is a really good one. It was that scheme which convinced me a better plan could be prepared than that produced by the Working Railways Department.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Did you order a consultation between Mr. George and the Engineer-in-Chief?

MR. JOHNSON: There are certain things one cannot discuss in Parliament. I favoured the Engineer-in-Chief's scheme in preference to the Commissioner's scheme. The point I want to make is that the Minister is absolutely at the mercy of the Commissioner. Supposing, for argument, I had brought in the Engineer-in-Chief, consulted and asked him over the head of the Commissioner to prepare plans

and estimates in connection with the Fremantle railway station, what would the Commissioner have said? He would have said, "This is a vote of no confidence in me. I am appointed sole manager of the railways. Why is the Engineer-in-Chief, who has absolutely nothing to do with the working of the railways, brought in over my head to dictate to me?" It is all very nice at election times to say these things should be done. I would like to have done what I refer to, but when I went deeply into the question I found it was hardly possible, under the terms of the Railway Act, for me to drag in somebody else in order to back up my opinions against those of the Commissioner. Let us get down to the main question. We have to consider what led up to the present Commissioner control. It will be borne in mind that the present Railways Act was brought into existence owing to dissatisfaction existing in relation to the previous Ministerial control. I was opposed to any change being made, as was also the member for West Perth, and I take it that the member for West Perth will support this motion, because at that time he was a strong advocate for Ministerial control. He was not a supporter of the proposal to hand over the railways to a Commissioner, and I look forward with pleasure to his speech on this occasion in support of the previous attitude he took up. However, there was at that time a difference of opinion on it. I personally was in favour of Ministerial control then. Previous to the appointment of the present Commissioner, we had Ministerial control. The Minister for Railways was in control of the railways, and under him he had the general manager. There was a lot of dissatisfaction, I admit. The people were very much dissatisfied with the Ministerial control, or rather with the general management of the railways at that time. But I think a number of those who supported the amendment of the Railways Act at that time were influenced not so much by dissatisfaction with the system, or influenced after questioning or studying the relative merits of the two systems, but they were influenced to support that measure because of the difficulty we had in connection with John Davies and all those inquiries. We all remember that at that time there was considerable public

discussion and a considerable amount of discussion in Parliament as to the management of our railway system.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The railway strike was included in the difficulties.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes; the strike was included. All those things combined to influence members to vote for anything to alter that system. I have read up the speeches recently.

MR. TAYLOR: It was a strong party question.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, it was; and Mr. Moran, then member for West Perth, was suspended over the debate on the question. However, the fact remains that to-day when we look back to the discussion on that measure, we must be convinced that the members were influenced more, as the present member for West Perth points out, by the strike on the railways and the general dissatisfaction with the action of the general manager as exposed by Mr. Holmes, the then member for East Fremantle. Members were influenced by that, and did not go into the question of the relative merits of the two systems. Why was the Ministerial control at that time a failure, why did the railways get away from the control of the Minister, and why were so much power and influence given to the general manager? We remember that at the inquiry which was held the Minister admitted he had given sanction to certain things, and the Minister's evidence at that time largely removed the charges that were made against the general manager. We found that the general manager had Ministerial approval for pretty well every action he had taken. So although there was dissatisfaction with the general management, we must be fair and say that the dissatisfaction was caused through Ministerial control. Let us see why the Ministerial control was not all that had been desired in those days. I have to go into the question. I am satisfied that the Minister at that time, although he devoted a considerable amount of attention to his department, had too much on his shoulders. We must remember that the Minister for Railways then was Minister for Public Works, and we must also remember that the Minister had a very large private business, which was growing by leaps and bounds as Western Aus-

tralia was going ahead by leaps and bounds. He had a large responsibility in connection with his own business. Then again he had, I say, the Public Works Department to control. We know he had huge sums of loan money to control, and huge sums of revenue to expend; and we know that he had control of the railways. As Minister for Public Works he had the Fremantle harbour works construction to attend to, and he had the goldfields water scheme started. He had these huge undertakings, besides a hundred and one things throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia. The Minister had to devote a considerable amount of attention to the Public Works Department, too much to my mind to allow him to devote that attention which was necessary in connection with the growing railway system of the State. He put too much confidence in the general manager, and, owing to the amount of work, he could not give the attention to details in connection with the railway system that would be desired on the part of a Minister controlling a big asset of this description.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He was overruled by his chief, too.

MR. JOHNSON: That had a certain amount of influence too, but the fact remains that even although we have to go back and say that the management of the railways in the old days was not all that was desired, still when we look back upon it calmly we can see it was not the system which was wrong, but the methods that were wrong at that time. The Minister did not give that attention to the Railway Department, owing to the huge amount of work he had to do in the Public Works Department, that would give him an opportunity of controlling the railway system as it could be controlled to-day under the Minister for Railways. The Commissioner system was introduced, and whatever is said about the powers of the Minister and the powers of the Commissioner, the fact still remains that the Commissioner is in charge of our railways. It is true that the Minister has to approve of certain expenditure, but as I have already pointed out under Section 16 of the Railways Act the sole management of the railways is given to the Commissioner. Let me put this

aspect before members. Take that blue-metal which was put down on our railways, especially between Perth and getting on to Chidlow's Well. Suppose that ballasting had been objected to by the Minister. The Commissioner comes along and recommends expenditure for the reballasting of the railway, and the Minister says, "The expenditure is not justified, and I cannot approve." The Commissioner is justified in replying, "You are interfering with the general management, you are interfering with the powers given to me for the general management of the railways under Section 16, and you refuse to authorise expenditure on that work, and I say it is absolutely necessary for the safe working of our railways." [Interjection.] It is possible for him to take up that position.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Would not that position apply to a general manager also?

MR. JOHNSON: No. The position is altogether different with a general manager. The general manager is not judged by Parliament, as the member for Collie judged him, as to the amount of revenue and the general working of the railways. We have the Minister to do that. The general manager has to manage the railways and carry out the details of policy as outlined by the Minister. But the Commissioner is in a different position altogether. We know the Commissioner's reputation is built up by the amount of revenue he can get per train mile, and it is not the question of the expenditure that the Commissioner attends to at all; he has not to take that into consideration. I do not say that he does not take it into consideration, because I know that Mr. George does, but what I want to emphasise is the fact that the Minister has not that influence over the railway system that members would be led to believe by some utterances that are made. The Minister has very small power under the present railway system; so little power that practically the workings are in the hands of the Commissioner absolutely. The Act undoubtedly gives him that, for it states he shall have the sole management of the railways. One has to look round and find what arguments are advanced in favour of the Commissioner control. I thought that the Minister when he

spoke would have some arguments to advance; but the whole of the Minister's speech was taken up in replying to criticisms by the member for Collie against the present Commissioner. As far as Commissioner control is concerned, there is nothing in the Minister's speech to justify the continuation of the system other than the fact that is generally advanced; and the only argument advanced in favour of Commissioner control is that it does away with political influence. But does it do away with political influence? Is political influence done away with so far as our railway system is concerned to-day? We have political influence to-day exactly the same as we had it under the old Ministerial control; and it does not matter what department you have under Government control, whether it be under a board, under a Commissioner, or under a Minister, a certain amount of political influence will be brought in. [Mr. EWING: Not to the same extent.] I contend that it will be. Let us look at some of the actions taken during the present session, and see whether political influence has been brought to bear in connection with the management of our railways. Take the motion in connection with Collie coal, brought forward by the member for Collie. Was not that political influence? Was not the hon. member urging as against the opinion of the Commissioner that more Collie coal should be used, and that greater consideration should be shown to the Collie coal industry by the Commissioner of Railways? [Interjection by Mr. EWING.] I do not object to the hon. member doing it, but what I want to point out is how utterly impossible it is to do away with political influence.

MR. DAGLISH: That is parliamentary control, not political influence.

MR. JOHNSON: It is unquestionably political influence. However, let us get away from that and come to the present timber trouble. What do we find in that connection? Is there political influence?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; there is Government control of the railway policy.

MR. JOHNSON: It is not a question of Government control of the railway policy. To-day the Combine desire to use political influence to induce the

present Government to reduce railway rates. An hon. member says they have succeeded. One thing I am proud of in connection with that dispute. If they have succeeded, they have not succeeded through any effort on the part of the workers. I am proud of the fact that the workers declined to use their political influence on the Government in order to obtain concessions for the Combine. That is political influence. You can call it by another name if you will, but the fact remains. When a member rises in this House, or goes to a Minister, and states that Jack Jones, an employee, is not being fairly dealt with by the Commissioner, that is not the only illustration of political influence. When employees are in question we find members complaining of political influence, and they say that is the only species of political influence that can exist. I have read debates on this question of control of the railways, debates not only here but in the Parliaments of other States; and I find that "political influence" is always taken to mean that members of Parliament use their positions to improve the condition of some employee in the service.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Ministers contend that they control freights. We must have that power. We control the general policy of the railways.

MR. JOHNSON: You do not. Presently I will give an illustration to prove that if the Minister thinks he controls the general policy, one of his colleagues does not think so. From what I have read and what I have heard in this House I know some members would like us to believe that political influence is used only in favour of employees. But as I stated, and the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) can agree or disagree, the fact remains that the clear interpretation put by the motion of the member for Collie on the action now being taken by the Timber Combine is political influence; and I contend it is utterly impossible, do what you will, to remove political influence altogether from our railway system. Let us look at another large revenue-earning department, one controlled by the Minister for Works, our Goldfields Water Supply. Can any member say that political influence is brought to bear on the administration of that department? The Minister for

Works would be the first to say "no," that he would not permit of any political influence. Yet the fact remains that this is a large revenue-earning department, serving an enormous number of people, and controlled by the Minister for Works; and I believe that the board, under Ministerial control, is one of the best administrative systems that Australia has seen. I am satisfied that we have there a good system of administration; and that is the sort of administration I should like to have over our State batteries and our railways. I wish to see the Minister in control, as chairman of the board if you will, laying down the general policy of such undertakings, the details of the policy being attended to by the general manager, the secretary, or whatever you like to call him. That is a system of control with which no man can say political influence has anything to do; and everyone must admit that control has been an absolute success up to date, and I believe it will be a success in the future. Consequently there we have a fair comparison; and in view of that fact it is utterly impossible for any member successfully to contend that political influence will have any direct bearing on the administration of our railways if under Ministerial control. It is utterly futile to say we can altogether abolish political influence; but the fact is, political influence does not affect the departments I have mentioned to the extent that members would like us to believe when they are advocating Commissioner control. What can be advanced in favour of Ministerial control? There is no doubt in my mind that the railways in this State may be made the principal means of developing its industries. But if the Government have no control of the railways, then their policy of general development is hampered. Western Australia is undoubtedly a country of huge distances, a large country that needs development in remote districts; and the only means of developing the different industries is by pushing ahead railway communication. No Government can carry out their policy while they are hampered as they are hampered to-day by Commissioner control. With Ministerial control they could work the railway system in accordance with their general policy. To-day no Government can do

that. Ministers are hampered by the present Railways Act. The Minister for Railways states that the present Government have absolute control of the railway system, and can dictate the policy to the Commissioner. But what did the Treasurer state as to the agricultural railways now in course of construction? That in order to run these cheaply, for the development of the country, it was necessary to retain control of them in the Public Works Department; or in other words the Treasurer stated—I believe these were his words, though I speak from memory—that if we build the lines cheaply, there is no guarantee that they will be run cheaply, and there is no guarantee that they will have the effect the Government desire, namely of advancing the agricultural industry; but in order to insure that those railways shall be run in accordance with the general policy of the Government, we shall not hand them over to the Working Railways Branch, we shall not place them under the Railways Act, but we shall keep them under the Works Department, and thus have some guarantee that the Minister will have control, and can use the lines in accordance with the general policy of the Government.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: "Can run them under the railway system."

MR. JOHNSON: I am almost certain that I read in the *West Australian* the statement just quoted.

THE MINISTER: I believe there was a statement.

MR. JOHNSON: I read it while on the fields; and it struck me at the time that the Treasurer was absolutely right. Seeing that the new lines are built out of loan, it is desirable that they should be as cheap as possible; but if we place them under the Railways Act and the Commissioner runs them as he runs the other portion of our railway system, there is no guarantee that they will afford that relief to the struggling agriculturist that we all wish to see afforded; and I believe, unless those lines are kept under the Public Works Department, the Government will find some difficulty in working them in accordance with their general policy of agricultural development; and I trust that if the Act is not amended to give the Government greater power over the railways, or to give the railways back

once more to be controlled by the Minister who represents the people, the Government will at least keep the new agricultural lines under the Public Works Department, so that they may work in with the general policy of the Ministry.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Works Department will be very anxious to get rid of them by handing them over to the Railway Department.

MR. JOHNSON: That is so; because running the railways by the Works Department will necessitate the employment of an extra staff. The department have not the staff necessary for running the lines; and that is why they like to hand them over to the Working Railways. But I wish to say I have every confidence in the ability of the Public Works Department to run those lines; and I have a great deal more confidence in the ability of the Works Department to construct the lines than I should have in the Working Railways Branch to do likewise; and there is a desire on the part of the Working Railways Branch, as I will point out later on, to have control of the construction as well as of the running of the railways. To illustrate how difficult it is for the Minister, under the existing Railways Act, to run the railways in accordance with the desires of the Government, I will quote one case. At Denmark, after the Timber Combine started operations, they I think closed the Denmark mill, near Albany. That mill was served by a railway, and a number of settlers had been encouraged by the existence of that railway, which was built many years ago, to take up small areas of what I believe is very rich land, and on this land they used to grow a considerable quantity of vegetables and other produce, which, together with fish from a certain portion of the district, used to be taken over this line and ultimately to the Eastern Goldfields. When the Combine got into working order they closed the Denmark mill and closed the railway also, and those settlers had no opportunity of getting their produce to market. They appointed a deputation to wait on me as Minister for Railways, and asked me to do something to assist them. After carefully investigating the matter I found there was an agreement entered into

between the Forrest Government, I think, and Millars' Company.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think it was made prior to that period.

MR. JOHNSON: However, by the agreement the Minister was given certain rights to operate that line under certain conditions. On inquiry I found it was possible for the Government to work the line; and the matter was so urgent, being a case of life or death to the settlers, that I decided to institute a train service. I told the deputation that an engine would be coupled to a truck; that it would run in one day and out the next, or something of that sort, but there would be no carriages. I promised them the cheapest service possible, on the very cheapest scale; also I assured them that the line would then be opened; but they doubted me. Seeing that the Commissioner had previously replied that the line could not be opened, they thought that though I gave them this assurance, I had not the necessary power. And I remember on that occasion, not knowing too much about the Railways Act, I said, "If that line is not opened at once, if I cannot get the Working Railways to open the line, it will be opened if I have to pay for it myself." The deputation went away perfectly satisfied. I tried to get the Working Railways Branch to open the line. I battled away as long as I was in office; and I understand from the Minister that the line is not yet opened.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There were legal complications.

MR. JOHNSON: The Crown Law Department led me to understand there were no difficulties, provided certain conditions were complied with; and the Government decided to comply with those conditions. We got past that phase of the question. The fact remains that I as Minister was convinced that those settlers deserved assistance; and although I desired to give it I was hampered and prevented; yet had I been the Minister for Public Works or any other department I could have carried a similar project into operation, and could have had the train service going almost immediately. But because this line was under the Railways Act I was hampered in my desire, and although I tried for some considerable time while in office, I

was unable to complete the matter, and even to-day we find that effect has not been given to my promise. That is one illustration to show that though the present Minister would like us to believe he has control over the policy of the Railway Department, the fact remains that he is hampered, if he is not absolutely prevented, he is hampered in his desire to work the railways in accordance with the general policy of the Government.

THE MINISTER: I contend that I can open that railway; but I submit the dangers are too great.

MR. JOHNSON: As to that there is a difference of opinion. I as Minister wished to open the line; and what I wished to do as Minister I generally did. But I found that under the Railways Act I had not the powers I possessed as Minister for Public Works or even as Minister for Mines. The Minister for Mines could decide on what was a right course of action, and could take that course though very often it was wrong; but the Minister for Railways had not power to carry out his wishes: he could not dictate the policy of the department as if he were Minister for Mines. Reference has been made by the Minister to the different systems prevailing throughout the different States, and reference was made to New Zealand. It is very interesting to read the debates in connection with the reversion of control from Commissioner control to Ministerial control in New Zealand. At one time they had Ministerial control in New Zealand. Then, like Western Australia, they handed the railways over to Commissioners. After a little trial of Commissioners they were dissatisfied, exactly as I claim the people of Western Australia are dissatisfied to-day, and they decided to bring the railway system once more under Ministerial control. The late Mr. Seddon introduced a Bill, not to do away with Commissioners, but to place the Minister for Public Works as Minister for Railways among the Commissioners. The proposal in the measure was that the Minister should be chairman of the board of Commissioners, having a deliberative and a casting vote; but when the Bill was brought before Parliament it was lost. Then there was a general election, and in the next session the Bill

was again introduced to do exactly the same thing, that is to make the Minister chairman of the board of Commissioners; but Parliament decided otherwise. There was a debate on the question, and in Committee a member moved an amendment that the railways revert back to Ministerial control, and it was done. The only argument of Mr. Seddon at that time was, "We have here an asset belonging to the people. It is an insult to the democracy of New Zealand to say that we as members of Parliament, representatives of the people, the owners of the railways, are not capable of administering the people's asset." And I say it is an insult to the democracy of Western Australia, and with that right hon. gentleman I say that if the Government are not capable of controlling our railway system, then they are not capable of controlling the Goldfields Water Supply Department, the Harbour Trust, the Agricultural Bank, the Savings Bank, or any other Government undertaking. If they are not capable in one direction they are not capable in another. If Ministerial control is desirable in one direction it is equally desirable in another. So I say that under these conditions we should revert to Ministerial control and place the people's asset that has cost the country ten millions of money, under the control of the people, so that they can have a say as to the general policy to be introduced in connection with this huge undertaking. There is another new consideration I desire to introduce into this debate. It is a matter I gave some consideration to when Minister for Public Works, and that is in connection with the wisdom of continuing the present practice of allowing the Commissioner of Railways to expend loan moneys when he is in charge of a large revenue-earning department. At the present time we have two votes. Parliament votes a sum of money under the heading of "Additions and Improvements to Opened Lines." That is a loan item. Then we have another vote—I do not remember its title, but it is practically the same wording—which is from revenue. The two votes are identical, but one is a revenue item and the other is a loan item, and the Commissioner of Railways, subject to the approval of the Minister for Railways, has control of

these two votes. I consider it is undesirable to continue that practice of allowing the person controlling a huge revenue department to control the expenditure of loan funds.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What will you do with your rolling-stock?

MR. JOHNSON: I forgot to point out that there are really three votes, but I did not know this until I became Minister for Railways. I would like to point out that the previous Minister did not know it was in existence, and I only found it out when discussing railway finance with the Commissioner of Railways in order to get an idea of how it was run. I discovered that, in addition to the loan item and the revenue item, there was another item which the Commissioner operated on; and this item was what he called "Savings over working expenses." I asked him what he meant by "Savings over working expenses," and I found out that the Commissioner had been in the habit of coming to Parliament and asking for a certain sum of money to be paid in wages and salaries, and that if he saved anything—suppose Parliament authorised him to spend £400 a month in wages and salaries, and he only spent £350, he would have £50 to spend—he spent it on additions and improvements to opened railways. In other words, the Commissioner used this sum of money in addition to the sum authorised by Parliament for additions and improvements. The Auditor General refers to it in his report for 1905 as "Betterments." When I discovered this vote was in force I discussed the matter with the then Treasurer (Mr. Dalglish), and it was questioned whether I was correct in my statement that the vote had been operated on. The Treasurer did not know it. However, we discovered that it was there; and after discussing the matter with the Auditor General, we found that it had been going on for a considerable time. The Commissioner had been operating on a vote which Parliament had never authorised. I only use this to point out that we have not after all that control of railway expenditure we imagine we have; and the previous Ministers did not know of it, and did not approve of this special expenditure. They thought that they gave the money for salaries and wages, but the fact remains that the savings out

of that money, instead of going back into consolidated revenue, were used for additions and improvements to opened lines. The Auditor General refers to this in his report.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Did you not have a conversation with Mr. Gardiner on this matter?

MR. JOHNSON: I will explain that. When I discovered the matter, not being a genius at finance I discussed it with the Treasurer, and he questioned whether I was correct. He said it was impossible for it to go on and the Auditor General not to know of it; and in passing one day I met Mr. Gardiner, and knowing that he had been Treasurer just previously and that he took a keen interest in the finances of the State, I asked him if he had any keen interest in railway finances. I tried to explain the point, but as soon as I got on to it he burst out laughing and said, "So you have discovered it." It appeared he had discovered it just prior to leaving office. I will not explain why he did not deal with the matter, but the fact remains that he took no action, and that he left no minute for his successor on the point. His successor did not notice it, and then I discovered it. I understand that now the Minister for Railways does not allow this expenditure to continue. As I said, the Auditor General reported on this matter. He said in his report for 1905:—

Betterments—Again this year it was found that a considerable sum had been charged to revenue items, wages, and materials, under railways for "New Works and Improvements."

That is the revenue item the title of which I could not remember just now. The report goes on—

The total amount so charged during the year was £11,969 8s. A report was made to the Treasurer, and in consequence the sum of £4,743 16s. 9d. was credited to revenue items as under—Material £2,124 5s. 4d., wages £2,517 17s. 1d., incidental £101 14s. 4d., and debited to loan item "Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways," leaving a balance of £7,225 11s. 8d.

It was credited to revenue and debited to loan. The Auditor General said farther:—

I have repeatedly requested a reply in connection with my report, but I have not as yet been furnished with the information necessary to enable me to decide what farther sum has been incorrectly charged. If the items making up the balance above referred to are such as

should be charged to New Works and Improvements, a surcharge will be raised for the amount. It is not understood why the Commissioner persisted in charging the expenditure in this manner, as I refused to pass it, and both Railway and Treasury Ministers have refused to allow it. The Railways Act provides that the Commissioner, with the permission of the Minister, may make additions and improvements to railways, but these improvements were made without the sanction of the Minister.

So we see that the Auditor General points out that, though we say in the Railways Act that all expenditure shall be subject to Ministerial control, the fact remains that since the Act has been in operation the Minister had not full control of the expenditure, and that, after all, the Commissioner has greater control of our railway system than even the Minister. It clearly proves that the Minister on this occasion did not know the amount of money that was actually expended in connection with the railway system, and further that there was another vote over and above the vote on the parliamentary Estimates authorised by this House that could be expended on works and improvements.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Those were simply small jobs paid for out of revenue.

MR. JOHNSON: The Minister does not clearly understand the position. The Auditor General points out that these "betterments" are not in connection with the "New Works and Improvements" vote at all. The "betterments" are in connection with savings over working expenses. Consequently it is wrong to use savings over working expenses for new works and improvements. If there is any saving in connection with wages and salaries it should go back to consolidated revenue. This money should not be used for works and improvements. The money is voted by Parliament for a specific purpose, and they should use it for no other purpose. It is what they call "betterments" in the report. I think this should be sufficient to convince members that we have not that control over our railway system that we should be led to believe we have, according to the reading of the Railways Act.

MR. DAGLISH: The question raised by the Auditor General proves that we have control.

MR. JOHNSON : It went on for a considerable time, and we had not the control. The Auditor General says that it was necessary for him to draw attention to the fact, and the fact remains that money was spent without Ministerial control. Had we a general manager there and the railways under Ministerial control, there would be no necessity to use this means of expenditure. The matter would be absolutely laid clearly before the Minister, and it would be for the Minister to control the vote. At the present time I desire in my remarks to try to convince members that the Minister has not that control over the votes that the Minister for Railways would like us to believe he has.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : It existed before Commissioner control.

MR. JOHNSON : If so, it shows that the Minister did not devote that attention to the control of the railways he should have.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : When I was Treasurer I had to fight that question.

MR. JOHNSON : I am sorry you did not stamp it out altogether.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : They did not leave me there long enough.

MR. JOHNSON : The fact remains that it did go on, and I understand it goes on to-day. This is only by the way. The point I wish to arrive at is the wisdom of continuing to allow the Commissioner of Railways to have the control of the expenditure of loan moneys. At one time in the history of the State the Public Works Department did all railway construction—they do it to-day—and in addition they had the control of “Additions and Improvements to Opened Lines,” that is the loan item. We had the Public Works Department controlling that vote, and the railway management controlling the revenue vote. We had expenditure of the revenue vote by the Minister and General Manager, while the loan item was controlled by the Minister for Public Works; and I contend the system was a success, and I regret extremely that the Minister permitted this “Additions and Improvements to Opened Lines” vote to be handed over to be expended by the Working Railways. I say it is a danger—I do not think it has been wrongly used, but it is a danger—to allow the manager of a huge revenue-

earning concern to have the expenditure of loan moneys in connection with that vote.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : Would you give the construction of the Beaufort Street bridge to the Public Works Department?

MR. JOHNSON : Let us see what has been done in connection with that matter. Let us take the William Street bridge. It was built by contract. Why could not the Public Works Department have controlled that contractor and looked after the contract equally as well as the Working Railways? What argument can be advanced that the Working Railways are more competent to govern and control the contractor than the Public Works Department? Even if we take the Beaufort Street bridge, it will only be a matter of the Commissioner having control of the expenditure of money subject to the approval of the Minister. He will call for tenders, and the work will be done by contract under the control of the Working Railways instead of under the control of the officers of the Public Works Department, who are more competent men to control this, and know more about it than the railway officers. They are experts and specialists in these matters, and I contend they are more competent to look after the control than the Working Railways Department. What influenced me to go into the matter was that the Working Railways were not satisfied in getting control of the “additions and improvements to opened lines” vote, but they desired to get control of the construction of new railways, and it was urged that they could carry out railway construction better and cheaper than the Works Department could. When that came along it convinced me that there was something wrong. Then I decided to go into the subject. I collected all the data so as to convince my colleagues that the time had arrived when we should go seriously into the question whether we should permit a continuance of the system of the expenditure of loan moneys by the Working Railways Branch. I was altogether opposed to giving the construction over to the Working Railways Branch, but I disapproved of allowing them to continue the expenditure on additions and improvements to opened lines. I think it is undesirable

that this should continue, for the Minister cannot decide whether a vote should be charged to loan or revenue. I found when I was Minister that I could not state whether an authority coming to me was really correct, when it asked for the approval of certain works from a revenue vote. I did not know whether it should be charged to loan or revenue; I was at the mercy of the Working Railways Branch. It is possible for them to use loan moneys on what should really be revenue works or *vice versa*.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Would you not see on the authority you signed?

MR. JOHNSON: How can a Minister make up his mind whether it is correctly charged against revenue or loan? Here is a minute in the 1904 report of the Auditor General dealing with the very question. It is as follows:—

There are two votes for "Additions and Improvements to Opened Lines," one under Revenue Railway Estimates, styled "New Works and Improvements;" the other under Loan, designated "Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways."

He couples them as I do. The extract continues:—

The Commissioner of Railways is empowered to spend the money provided by Parliament, subject to the sanction of the Minister for Railways. Take, for example, the duplication of a line or the building of a new station. In the case of the latter, assuming that an existing station (the cost of which had been charged to Loan and treated as capital expenditure in the railway accounts) is pulled down and a new station built, also debited to Loan and treated as capital expenditure, the transaction would be in accordance with the Statute, and we have then both the new and the old station charged to capital, although the latter is not in existence. Under present conditions my duty would cease in satisfying myself that Ministerial approval had been received, and that the work was an "addition" or "improvement" to existing lines.

From this, members will see the difficulties a Minister is placed in under the existing conditions. The Auditor General goes on to say:—

It is not, however, intended to convey the idea that there are no circumstances under which improvements to existing lines would not be chargeable to capital without writing off the cost of the original work, but merely to show that under existing conditions the capital account of the Railways can be loaded with incorrect charges without any right on my part to query them.

Members will see that a Minister has not

even the protection of the Auditor General, and I defy anybody to be able to say from the authority placed before him whether the work should be charged against loan or revenue. What Minister can do it? He requires to be an expert to be able to do it. The Minister may be misled and he may do wrong. It would not be so bad if he did wrong and it could be found out by the Auditor General and put right. But the Auditor General points out that it is not his duty to find out if it is right or wrong. All he has to do is to see if it has been approved by the Minister and charged up to the right vote. We want the Engineer-in-Chief to decide whether this is loan work or revenue work.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This does not in any sense deal with the question now before the House.

MR. JOHNSON: When I started my argument I said I was introducing something new into the debate. I think this is a favourable opportunity of bringing before the House an evil which I think exists, and as the Minister admits that it will be necessary to amend the Railways Act, I hope when he does so he will take this matter into consideration. Is any more argument necessary than simply reading the remarks of the Auditor General? They are sufficient to convince the House that something is wrong in the present system, and that it is desirable to go into the present system and remove the control of loan expenditure from the Working Railways Branch, and place it once more under the Public Works Department.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As a matter of fact the exact opposite has been done.

MR. JOHNSON: Am I to understand from the statement of the member for West Perth that the remarks of the Auditor General are incorrect?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

MR. JOHNSON: I cannot quite follow the hon. member; no doubt in his speech he will point out what he refers to. In considering this matter I inquired, or rather I got officers of the department to inquire as to the system prevailing in the different States. I found—and this was while I was Minister for Works—that in South Australia the construction is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief, under the Commissioner for Railways, who him-

self is under the Commissioner for Works and Industry. In South Australia they carry out the principle which I think should be reintroduced in Western Australia; the maintenance is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Commissioner of Railways. In Victoria it is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Board of Land and Works. In New South Wales it is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Public Works Department; in Queensland it is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Commissioner of Railways; in New Zealand it is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Public Works Department; and in Tasmania it is carried out by the Engineer-in-Chief under the Minister for Works, who is also Minister for Railways. Taking the other States as an example we find our system here is not in accordance with that in vogue in the other States. I ask that we should reintroduce the system which we previously had in this State and follow the example set by the majority of the other States and New Zealand. It is very interesting to read the opinions of, if I may say it, a master mind, the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor, on this question. The extract is a rather lengthy one, but is so interesting and is contained in the report for 1900 that I shall ask members to bear with me while I read it.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Would it not be well to bring this up on the Loan Bill?

MR. JOHNSON: I would rather the matter should not be introduced on the Loan Bill. We have now a debate on a specific matter, while on the Loan Bill this question would be mixed up with other questions, and there might be one or two rows going on and perhaps we should lose sight of the question altogether. The late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor, I think every member will agree, was one of the greatest authorities in Australasia, and I question whether there was a better authority in the world on the question of railway construction. He states in 1904 as follows, after quoting a number of figures which I promised that I would not go into:—

In view of these figures and also in view of what anyone can see—

He goes into the question of the Working Railways having the power to reduce the

cost of a railway that is to be constructed. The present Ministry found, in connection with the agricultural railways, that they had some difficulty with the Working Railways Branch, and the same thing occurred in connection with numerous other railway undertakings. They can deduct to a certain extent the conveniences attached to a given line of railway. The question arose whether they should take into consideration the public requirements of the district. I am rather inclined to think when they are getting a line built they know they will have to operate that line when constructed, and they try to get better conveniences than perhaps the country the line is opening up justifies.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who was responsible for the expensive buildings along the Menzies line?

MR. JOHNSON: The Working Railways Branch. I challenge the Minister to produce the minute of the Engineer-in-Chief on the question. He drew attention to that very matter and tried to convince the Working Railways Branch that these railway buildings were not required in connection with the Menzies line and the Cue line also.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will look it up.

MR. JOHNSON: I can give the Minister the date; I have it, for I kept a copy of all these matters when I went into the question, and tried to convince my colleagues that it was undesirable to continue the system of expending loan moneys by the Working Railways Branch. The late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor said:—

In view of these figures, and also in view of what anyone can see of the works on the ground, it appears to me to be evident that the traffic view of the question has overridden all other aspects of it, and that works (in addition to reproductive works) have been constructed with a view to some slight saving in traffic expenses, or to attain some temporary convenience, which have not been reproductive in other respects, and which have, in fact, tended to disimprove rather than to improve the commercial aspect of the undertaking.

That is the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor's opinion, and it absolutely agrees with mine. They have been viewing the question from their point of view; working the line more conveniently for their own purpose, rather than considering the re-

quirements of the district. He goes on—

It was in view of what I saw to be the probabilities in that direction that I wrote, as already quoted, in my report for the year 1897-8, to the effect that it was questionable if it was a wise arrangement "to thus combine the designing of the railways with working of them, and to place the control of capital expenditure in the hands of the officers who are working the railways. Personally, I have been convinced for many years, and many experts and others who have had experience of the matter have been convinced for many years, that it is not a wise arrangement to thus combine the designing of the railways with the working of them, if for no other reason, for the reason already stated that the designing of an engineering work of this character to produce the best and most economical results is a science in itself, and that it is unwise to throw upon officers who have already a great and anxious task in their hands in maintaining the way and works and rolling-stock in safe and efficient condition and in arranging the train services and in administering the whole of the operations of goods and passenger traffic and the collection of all revenue and earnings, the additional task of studying, from the experience of various countries, and thinking out and initiating the designs of railway construction which would be most suitable to the surrounding conditions. To all this, it may of course be contended, and in fact it has been contended, that the engineers in the Railway Department itself should be and possibly are as good judges as to how railway works should be designed as the engineers of the Public Works Department can be, or possibly better; but even if my own personal and rather special training and experience in the matter (extending continuously over a period of 40 years in Europe and Australasia) be altogether ignored, there is still the very important fact to be borne in mind, namely that the engineers in the Railway Department itself must necessarily be much more subject to coercion by the traffic officers than the engineers in the Public Works Department would be, and would thus, consequently and inevitably and for the sake of peace and quietness, be drawn into the construction of works chargeable to capital account, whenever the Traffic Department pressed for them (and in the manner or the scope that the Traffic Department desired them to be), even though opposed to their own judgment.

There you will see that the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor contended, after years of study, after 40 years' practical experience of the subject, that it was absolutely dangerous to allow the Working Railways Branch to control loan expenditure; and as he points out, the engineers in the Working Railways Branch would be more liable

to be influenced by those controlling the Traffic Branch than the engineers would be in the Public Works Department. And I agree absolutely with the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor that the system prevailing to-day is a dangerous one. I do not say it has been wrongly used, but it is there and can be wrongly used; and I contend that where you see it is possible for a wrong to be done and it can be removed, it is the duty of the Government to remove it. I appeal to members to go into this question and see if the time has not arrived when we should separate expenditure out of loans from expenditure out of revenue. The Working Railways Branch should spend money from revenue, but we should remove from them the possibility of using loan moneys for works that should be done out of revenue. There is another side also, the question of economy. When you speak of economy nowadays a lot of members seem to think that you are speaking of a reduction of salaries. That is not so at all. It is not necessary to reduce salaries in order to bring about economy. The best way to economise is to concentrate, to put all the branches together and have one huge department to control the concern. Or, in other words, in the interests of economy it is desirable that the Public Works Department should be given the control of all loan expenditure on all public works. And we must bear this in mind, that in years gone by the Public Works Department had huge sums of loan money to expend, huge works to undertake; but to-day they have not those huge undertakings; we are not now spending money to the extent we were a few years ago; consequently we have the services of the Engineer-in-Chief not used to the same extent as they were in years gone by.

THE PREMIER: But you have to keep your maintenance engineers, have you not?

MR. JOHNSON: Not necessarily so. Engineering in connection with maintenance is a very small item. Maintenance can be carried out by supervisors: you do not want these highly qualified engineers to carry out maintenance work. And that is a way in which I think economy can be effected. It would be possible to transfer those officers, those engineers, those supervisors and those

men who are utilised to-day by the Working Railways Branch to the Public Works Department, and by concentrating the two under one head you will be able to reduce considerably the number of engineers and officers employed to-day. You have engineers, supervisors, and others under the Engineer-in-Chief carrying out railway construction, and you have another set of officers carrying out railway construction—for “additions and improvements to opened lines” is practically railway construction—under the Commissioner of Railways. The fact remains that you have two sets of officers working on exactly the same work, and it has been shown to be possible by combining them to reduce the expenditure in this direction, and therefore to bring about economy. Let us look at the Public Works Department. Previous to 1904 we had an engineer for water supply, with draftsmen, supervisors, and engineers, and we had an engineer for railway construction who had his staff of engineers, draftsmen and everything else; and each of these sub-branches had chief clerks. But it was found when they got to the Barracks that it was possible to put all the draftsmen into one room, and the draftsmen now under one head draftsman are doing the work for all the branches, instead of being separate and under separate engineers. It was found that by concentrating and combining that work we were able to reduce the expenditure considerably. Not only did we do so in connection with the drafting-room, but also in connection with supervision. The supervisors in connection with our harbours and rivers, in connection with our roads and bridges, and in connection with our water supply were all combined. It was possible when there was slackness in one branch to utilise the services of the officers in that branch for other branches. In the interests of economy it should be done. Concentrate those officers and place them under one head, and you will be able to economise to that extent.

THE PREMIER: It does not necessarily follow that—

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I am only going by practical experience.

THE PREMIER: It does not follow that because a man is a competent harbour

engineer he is qualified to control railway construction.

MR. JOHNSON: I quite understand that; but in the matter of supervision when you have a set of designs and plans before you it is quite possible for an engineer in one line to supervise in another. I do not say that an engineer can design under water supply and then design under railway construction; but the fact remains—

THE PREMIER: The work of a water supply draftsman is totally different from that of an engineering draftsman.

MR. JOHNSON: Let us look at the draftsmen. They are all in the one room at the Public Works Department. They do railway construction, they do water supply, and they do sewerage plans, and they all are under the one head draftsman.

THE PREMIER: It is absolutely different work altogether.

MR. JOHNSON: I admit it is different work, but the fact remains that it is being done under the one supervision. The engineer for water supply consults the head draftsman in connection with his plans, and the engineer in charge of some other work consults the head draftsman in connection with his work, but the fact remains that the whole of the drafting is done in the one room, under one head draftsman. It is the same in clerical work. Instead of having several chief clerks, there is one, and the whole of the correspondence is done for the whole of the branches. By concentrating these officers into one group in the Public Works Department we reduce the expenditure considerably. I believe a saving running into something like £10,000 was effected altogether by transferring the officers from different parts of the city into the one building and concentrating them there. I am convinced that while we have railway construction under two different heads we shall not exercise these economies, and that we shall be having unnecessary expenditure. Consequently I claim that in the interests of economy it is desirable to transfer this work back to the Public Works Department, and so remove the loan expenditure from the control of the Commissioner of Railways. In conclusion, I would like to point out that the

motion has been introduced at a most opportune time. We know that the term of the present Commissioner's engagement will shortly expire, in July next I think it is. We have to decide whether the Commissioner shall be reappointed or whether we shall revert to Ministerial control. The Ministry will possibly say that we shall have time to deal with this question next session. I question very much whether we shall be able to deal with it next session before the time arrives to give the necessary notice. Consequently, the motion is most opportune; and if members desire to revert to Ministerial control, they should vote for this motion to-night. It is utterly impossible to get any assurance that we shall be able to deal with the question next session, because the session may be delayed until it is too late to deal with this question; but we are in a position to-night to give directions to the Government as to what is the desire of this Parliament; and I appeal to members to give that decision. If they are satisfied with control by a Commissioner, of course they can vote against the motion; but if they desire a reversion to Ministerial control, it is their duty to vote for the motion. I contend that this question was raised in most constituencies at the time of the last general elections, and I assert that a majority of this Chamber advocated on the hustings reversion to Ministerial control.

THE PREMIER: Would you suggest that with regard to the Public Service Commissioner as well?

MR. JOHNSON: The Public Service Commissioner is not controlling a revenue-earning department.

THE PREMIER: But would you carry your idea so far?

MR. JOHNSON: I do not see where there is any analogy in the two cases. One officer has been appointed to control and look after the public service, but this is dealing with the control of a large revenue-earning department. There is no comparison between the two. I do not know what the Premier can see or what the question relates to. How can you urge that by appointing a Public Service Commissioner you put the civil service outside Ministerial control as you did the working of the railways by

appointing a Railway Commissioner? I am now dealing with an asset of the people, because the railways belong to the people; and where you have a revenue-earning department belonging to the people, the people should have control of it. The Minister for Railways, in his concluding remarks, stated that next year it would be necessary to decide whether we are going to continue the present system of control by one Commissioner; and he said he thought that three Commissioners were more desirable. I do not know whether he was voicing the policy or the opinions of the Government or his personal opinion. The only definite thing I was able to gather from his speech was that he was inclined to advocate that instead of having one Commissioner we should have three. Consequently, members can see that this matter is in the mind of the Minister, and it is necessary, as he points out, that it shall be dealt with next year. But I say it is dangerous to leave the consideration of the question until next year. We may not, I say, have an opportunity of dealing with it next year until the term of the present Commissioner is renewed or he is perhaps dismissed—I do not know what it will be. In advocating Ministerial control, I urge upon members that it is necessary to deal with this question now, and consequently I appeal to them to seriously consider it and to vote solidly for the motion.

At 6:28, the **SPEAKER** left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

On motion by the **MINISTER FOR WORKS**, debate adjourned.

BILL—CONTRACTORS AND WORKMEN'S LIEN.

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the 3rd Oct.

Order of the Day read.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

REPORT—LAND SELECTION (S.W.), MR. SCOTT'S.

TO ADOPT REPORT.

A select committee having inquired and reported—

MR. H. DAGLISH (chairman of the committee) now moved—

That the report of the select committee be adopted.

He said: The principal features of the case are embodied in the report already presented by the committee, who experienced considerable difficulty in securing the evidence requisite to enable them to arrive at a satisfactory decision; for no person could be found in the Government service who knew the area in respect of which the complaint arose. The circumstances are briefly that in 1887 a Mr. James Scott purchased a pastoral lease of 5,000 acres, on the River Tone, for £100. At that time the river had not been surveyed, and therefore was not properly marked on the maps of the Lands Department. Some few years later, when a survey was made, it was found that the river was wrongly shown on the original plans; an amended plan was issued, and on this plan 1,000 acres of Mr. Scott's lease, which adjoined the river, was cut out. Of this area, 800 acres was transferred and made an addition to a lease held by Mr. J. Hassell, on the opposite side of the River Tone, and 200 acres being the balance of the thousand acres excised was included in a "poison lease." Subsequently these alterations were discovered by Mr. Scott, who was not aware of the excision until he received the information in a casual conversation with Mr. Hassell, when that gentleman was visiting the locality. On ascertaining the circumstances, Mr. Scott at once applied to the department to reinstate the excised area in his lease. Within a few months after the application, the 800 acres which had been included in Hassell's lease was retransferred to Scott's lease, but the 200 acres embraced in the poison area remained as a reserve. The Government of the day withdrew it from the poison area and proclaimed it a reserve, giving Scott and Hassell equal rights of access to it for watering purposes. Scott at once expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement, refused to accept the lease with that excision, and for the past 11 or 12 years has been in constant correspondence with the Lands Department, complaining all the time of the fact that he had taken up land which, by the excisions made, he was prevented from using. In addition

to this, in 1893 Mr. Scott applied for a conditional purchase selection of 160 acres within the area of his pastoral lease, and situated on the Mulladup Pool, on the Tone River. A surveyor was instructed to survey the conditional purchase; and according to his statement to the committee he, for the purpose of making that survey, visited the homestead on which Mr. Scott was then residing. According to Mr. Scott, the surveyor met him in Bridgetown, where that officer was then located, and informed Scott that he had received orders to visit the place for the purpose of making the survey. It is alleged by Mr. Scott that the surveyor then declined to make the survey where it was required so as to include a certain area that had been cleared and planted with fruit trees, and to include also certain improvements in the shape of sheds. According to Scott's statement, Scott then told him that in these circumstances it would be of no use for him to go on with the survey. The surveyor distinctly and directly contradicts Scott's statement on this point, stating first of all that the interview, instead of being at Bridgetown, happened on Location 175, where Scott was then residing, and that the effect of the interview was that when he arrived to make the survey, Scott told him it was no use going on with it, inasmuch as Scott had been so severely harassed by the Lands Department in regard to his pastoral lease that he was sick of the whole business, or something to that effect. These two conflicting statements were made as to an interview in 1895; and both witnesses adhere to their statements. The committee, therefore, had great difficulty in arriving at any conclusion as to that interview, but reached the opinion that in view of the fact that Mr. Scott's mind was constantly occupied with the details of the complaint he was making and reiterating against the Lands Department, and that he had no great number of subjects to distract his attention, it was likely that his memory would be fairly accurate; while on the other hand the surveyor, who would be busy month in and month out making departmental surveys all over the district, would be far more liable, considering the multiplicity of details he had to keep before him, to wander

inadvertently from strict accuracy in recollection of facts. The matter has been brought under the notice, I think, of every Government that has been in Western Australia during the past 12 years. During Mr. Hopkins's term as Minister for Lands in the James Administration, consequent on Mr. Scott's letters to Mr. Hopkins the question was put in the hands of two of the officers of the Lands Department, Messrs. Hughes and Morris, and they came to the conclusion that Mr. Scott had not been treated as well as he might have been. I shall read to the House an extract from the report of those officers. After recapitulating the circumstances of the case, they said :—

In our minds there is no doubt that Mr. Scott has good ground for complaint against the department, primarily for interfering with the boundaries of his pastoral lease No. 66/502, and giving to an adjoining lessee what is described as the pick of his lease, and then, after discovering and admitting the mistake, in neglecting to reinstate him in possession of the land. There is no means of ascertaining what actual loss or injury Mr. Scott has suffered through being deprived of the grazing rights over portions of his pastoral lease up to the time it was legally forfeited (and it may reasonably be assumed that he would have continued in occupation of the land to this day but for the unfortunate mistake that occurred), so it is difficult to make a recommendation as to compensation on that score. In regard to the improvements stated to have been effected on the land afterwards selected under C.P., the pastoral lease gives the lessee no right to cultivate the land, but the shed erected could be classed as an improvement under the regulations of 1887.

Let me interpolate for a moment that the committee ascertained that a certain sum had been spent in clearing and improving a certain portion of the land for orchard purposes, and it was given in evidence by officers of the Lands Department that this was not proper expenditure on a pastoral lease; but at the same time the committee had before them the fact that for two years after the application for the conditional purchase area of 160 acres had been made, Mr. Scott had been paying rent before the surveyor visited the ground to make the survey of the conditional purchase block; and as his application had been formally approved, he was justified, at all events from the time the application had been lodged and the rent was accepted, in making any expendi-

ture of that nature on the land for which he made the conditional purchase application, though he had done it, as others have done time after time throughout the State, at a certain amount of personal risk. The shed referred to is a shearing shed for which likewise compensation is claimed. The report goes on :—

These papers do not disclose any substantiation of Mr. Scott's assertion as to improvements, and before any valuation could be placed upon same the land would require to be inspected and reported upon, but it must be remembered that over eight years have elapsed since occupation. The tone of his letters was not courteous, and did not tend to bring about a settlement, although possibly what may be expected from an injured person and one who seems to have been unfortunate in his dealings with the department. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, we think Mr. Scott should receive compensation, and would suggest that he be recouped the amount paid by him as consideration for the transfer of pastoral lease No. 66/502 (£100) together with the rent paid to the Government from the time he had possession to the date of forfeiture, viz. from 1887 to 1892 i.e. £30, as well as the amount paid in connection with the conditional purchase No. 48/1662, viz. £5, or in all £135. (Signed) C. G. MORRIS and G. R. HUGHES.

In dealing with that report, the recommendation for compensation was not supported by the Under Secretary. The minute of the Under Secretary is somewhat a lengthy document as is that from which I have read extracts, but I shall read the Under Secretary's summing up, which is as follows :—

To sum up then—(a) The encroachment on Hassell's lease was rectified as soon as possible after attention was called to it. (b) The small portion of 200 acres taken from his lease and included in a poison lease 8/259 was made a reserve, and he subsequently had the free use of it. (c) When he left his lease unpaid the department, so soon as Scott asked or demanded it, protected the land by temporarily reserving it for him, and it was so protected for about one year. (d) His C.P. selection was voluntarily thrown up.

In that opinion, by the way, the Under Secretary apparently has accepted as indisputable the report made by the surveyor on the case. The summing up continues :—

(e) His application for a poison lease was refused because it interfered with a pastoral lease. I maintain that from the commencement of the correspondence, the department has tried to meet Mr. Scott fairly, but he has proved most untractable, as his letters show and would be satisfied with nothing but

what he considered his legal rights, i.e. the restitution of the 200 acres included in poison lease 8/259. Although, as previously stated, I thought this should have been restored to him, I think it would be a mistake now to offer him compensation for an alleged wrong which occurred 15 years ago, and which has been dealt with by three previous Ministers, though there would be no objection to saying that you would grant him an interview to enable him to put his case personally before you, it being one of his grievances that he has not had an opportunity of doing this. The whole of the land in dispute, viz. Scott's lease, Hassell's lease, and the poison lease, are now vacant, and the reserve may be cancelled if you see fit; so Mr. Scott may have his choice of the land if he now desires to take up another lease.

As a result of that, Mr. Hopkins wrote a minute in which he said :—

A money grant is out of the question, and is calculated to simply stir up others to make similar demands.

This matter then lapsed until a new Ministry came into office, when representation was made to me (Mr. Daglish) as Premier on the subject, and as a result I referred the matter to the Lands Department, and got a statement from the then Minister for Lands (Mr. Drew), who again gives the main features of the case and adds :—

My opinion is that a mistake was made in the first place by the department giving preference to Hassell in amending the boundaries of the pastoral leases. As pointed out, this matter was rectified.

Then Mr. Drew goes on to make farther comments to the effect of those I have just read from the Under Secretary's minute of 193, and he winds up :—

I agree with the Under Secretary that Mr. Scott is not entitled to any compensation. Admitting that errors were made, every effort was put forward by the department to meet Scott, but he seems to have been an extremely difficult person to deal with.

On that, Mr. Scott called to see me personally when he was in Perth, and the member for Nelson (Mr. Layman) also called to see me in connection with the matter; and I agreed that if I remained in office I would support a proposition to refer the question to a select committee on condition that Scott would agree to accept as final the decision of that select committee. Scott fell in with that proposition; but unfortunately for the State the Government went out of office before the promise could be fulfilled. During

the present session, in accordance with that promise the Premier agreed to support the appointment of this select committee. Mr. Scott, when he came before us, read a statement. I may add that he is a gentleman between 80 and 90 years of age, and these are circumstances that should be taken into consideration in dealing with the opportunities he had to retake up this lease some years after he originally took it up. Each year has placed greater difficulties in his way, and at present he seems to be not in the best of health; he is naturally feeble, and labours under the farther disadvantage of being deaf. These are circumstances that made the work of the select committee more difficult than it would otherwise have been. Mr. Scott, in his claim, asks for altogether £997 10s. When giving evidence he was asked :—

You agree to accept the recommendation of the committee as final?

Answer: Of course; certainly I should not think of asking any of you gentlemen to come and make an award and not agree to it. I look on the inquiry as being of value.

I hope that the Government will likewise accept the conclusion of this committee; and in asking the Government to do that, I wish to say that, so far as I was able to judge, the committee were entirely unprejudiced in the way they went into the matter; they went into it with great difficulties because of the want of testimony. Only two persons who were obtainable as witnesses, Mr. Scott and his son, had actually seen the pastoral lease; no officer of the Lands Department had been on it, and we had therefore no opportunity of getting any evidence in regard to the value of the improvements that had been effected, except that put in by the claimant and his son and, farther than that, a general opinion as to the cost and value of an orchard at a certain stage, and the value of a shed, wool press, and so on. This is all the testimony we could possibly get dealing with the value of some of the items in the claim. The committee went into the claim item by item, and on three items they thought Mr. Scott had no claim at all, and recommend therefore that he should receive no consideration in regard to these matters, but they recommend that he should receive the return of his purchase money £100, also £155 on account

of the loss of the orchard, which should have been included in the conditional purchase, and that he should receive on account of fencing £30, and on account of clearing £25, making in all £310 recommended to be awarded to him as against £997 10s. claimed. These valuations, because of the want of evidence due to the time that has elapsed partly and partly also to the remote situation of the pastoral lease, are only approximate, but they are as nearly correct as the committee could possibly make them. I believe, in the words of those officers whose report I have read, "that Scott has not been too well treated by the Lands Department." In fact on that point there can be no discussion whatsoever. The point is not arguable. The only question is whether the House is in duty bound morally to give him some compensation, or refuse compensation. I am adverse as a rule to recommending compensation unless the very strongest moral case is made out. This case fully justifies a departure from any general rule of that sort, therefore I beg to move that the committee's report be agreed to.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Moore): In order to give an opportunity of perusing the file, I move that the debate be adjourned. I have not had an opportunity of going into the report of the committee and the recommendations, but these will have every consideration at the hands of the Government. Before dealing with the matter, I should like to go through them fully.

Motion passed, the debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

IN COMMITTEE.

Resumed from the previous day; **MR. ILLINGWORTH** in the Chair, the **PREMIER** in charge of the Bill.

Clause 70—Amendment of No. 58 of 1902, Section 10:

MR. WALKER: It was only on the understanding that the remaining clauses were machinery clauses and affected no principle, and that the Premier had promised to recommit the Bill, that he would assent to the measure being

proceeded with in a thin House and on a private members' night.

Clause passed.

Clauses 71 to 85—agreed to.

New Clause—Devises, etc.:

THE PREMIER moved that the following be added as Clause 26:—

Whenever any person acquires any interest in land held under Parts V., VI., VII., or VIII. of the principal Act, or any two or more of such parts, as the devisee or next-of-kin of a deceased proprietor, it shall not be obligatory upon such person, during the twelve months next following the death of the deceased proprietor, to comply with the residential conditions to which such land may be subject, and such land so acquired may be held by the devise or next-of-kin during such period, notwithstanding that the land so acquired may, together with land previously held by him, exceed the maximum area a person may lawfully hold under this Act.

This was brought forward according to a promise made to the Committee. Where a person was a beneficiary under a will, and where land was left and the area was in excess of that allowed under the Bill, the clause gave 12 months in which to reduce the area to the maximum.

Question passed, the clause added.

New Clause—Working men's blocks:

THE PREMIER moved that the following be added as Clause 47:—

Section eighty-eight of the principal Act is amended by adding a proviso as follows:—
"Provided that no person who has held and forfeited, transferred, or otherwise disposed of a working man's block, shall be eligible to obtain any other working man's block in the same district, except in special cases in the discretion of the Minister."

This clause provided that only in one goldfields district could a man acquire one working man's block. At the same time should he remove his residence from one district to another, he would have an opportunity of taking up a working man's block in the district to which he had removed.

MR. SCADDAN: Frequently miners left a district through ill health, or went away and sold their blocks. On returning they should be allowed to make application for a block on certain conditions. It was not wise to provide that the applicant should appeal direct to the Minister. Scores of persons sold residential areas with the intention of permanently residing in the Eastern States, but after being away some time they returned to Western

Australia. These persons should not be prevented from taking up another residential area. The question might be dealt with on recommittal.

MR. HEITMANN: The intention of the Government was to encourage miners and others to settle on the land. Under the Gold Mines Act miners could take up a homestead lease. The country around Day Dawn at one time was a huge sheep station, and many miners had taken up homestead blocks in this locality. They were charged 5s. or 6s. an acre for the land, whereas the squatter who formerly leased the land paid 1s. per thousand acres. The Premier might take this matter into consideration, and bring the miners' homestead leases under the Land Bill.

MR. JOHNSON: Some provision should be made to meet such cases referred to by the member for Ivanhoe. In order to get over the difficulty he moved that the words "in special cases" be struck out. That would give a wider margin to the Minister to use his discretion whether a workman should have the right to take up a second block after having sold one.

THE PREMIER: The idea of putting in this clause was to prevent a man from taking up more than one homestead block. At the same time the Government did not wish to be hard, and he thought the proviso "in special cases in the discretion of the Minister" would meet the case. He was, however, prepared to accept the amendment of the hon. member.

MR. WALKER: A man such as was described by the member for Ivanhoe should have a perfect right, so long as blocks were open for residential purposes, without consulting the Minister. He rather feared giving the Minister power to prevent anyone from obtaining that right under such circumstances as described by the hon. member. He did not wish to delay the Bill.

Amendment passed; the new clause as amended agreed to.

New Clause—Eucla Division, rental:

MR. JOHNSON moved that the following be added as Clause 50 (notice of it given by Mr. Hudson):—

Section ninety-five of the principal Act is amended by striking out the words "five

shillings" and inserting in lieu thereof the words "one shilling," and by striking out the words "three pounds" and inserting in lieu thereof the words "one pound."

The alteration would reduce the rental of the areas held in the Eucla Division. He understood that the argument which the hon. member in favour of the reduction would advance was that this country was being overrun with rabbits. It was not protected by the rabbit-proof fence. As a matter of fact the rabbit-proof fence had had the opposite effect, inasmuch as it kept the rabbits on that country, and numerous squatters had been ruined owing to the fact that rabbits had got into the country. Squatters and settlers in the locality were endeavouring to combat this pest, and every encouragement should be given them. It was rather a delicate matter for an hon. member representing a district to move in the House for a special reduction for that district, but members would realise that in this case there were special circumstances.

MR. WALKER: A letter had been received by the member for Dundas from one of the settlers in the district, who stated that settlers had been left to battle against the rabbits as best they could. They had, said the writer, spent the best part of their lives in improving an arid wilderness which before their arrival had supported a few savages and kangaroos. After a struggle which few were able to realise they had the worst difficulties when they were overwhelmed with rabbits; and unless the Government could grant them some concessions they would be compelled to abandon the country. People in that part of the country would be amply taxed by having to live there and fight against the difficulty now existing. A peppercorn rent would be quite sufficient until the pest had been got rid of. We wanted settlement, and particularly was it necessary in these rabbit-infested districts, because there was no protection against pests of this kind equal to settlement.

MR. A. J. WILSON: These people had a right at the present time to take up areas of land not less than 20,000 acres for 5s. per 1,000 acres. If 4s. per 1,000 acres was going to stand between these people and prosperity, the sooner the Government transferred them from that particular area the better it would

be for the whole of the community. He would oppose any reduction as suggested by the member for Guildford.

MR. BUTCHER: Instead of receiving a certain amount of assistance which he might have obtained from members on the Opposition side of the House in relation to pastoralists, he had received opposition. [Indications of dissent.] When one of their own representatives happened to be representing a pastoral district which was affected more or less by some pest, they moved for relief. He would assist them in getting it. He was quite in sympathy with the mover of the new clause. People in the district referred to were miles and miles away from a market and had no means of getting there. They had the elements to contend with, also the native dogs; and now they had the rabbits. He hoped that if the Premier could not see his way to go the whole distance indicated by the proposed new clause, he would go part of the way and offer some reasonable relief to these settlers.

THE PREMIER: The Government had recognised that as far as the Eucla Division was concerned, people were entitled to some special consideration, and while the rent of the whole of the pastoral leases in the five other divisions of the State had been increased, the Government had not increased the rent in this at all. In the Far North we increased it from 10s. per 1,000 acres to £1, and in the Central Division from 5s. to 10s., whilst in the Eucla Division the amount remained as before.

MR. WILSON: Very generous treatment too.

THE PREMIER: In regard to rabbits, as far as some portion of the district was concerned it was not so bad as had been pointed out. Quite recently he had an opportunity of going over a considerable portion of that area, and in a five days' trip they saw five rabbits. They also saw some excellent pastoral country. At the same time there were some portions of this particular division, more especially towards the South Australian border, where undoubtedly rabbits had done a great deal of harm and the pastoralists at the present time were having rather a bad time of it. The proposal, however, to reduce the charge from 5s. per 1,000 acres down to 1s. per

1,000 acres was asking the Government to accept too much altogether. It would be far better for the hon. member to say he thought that in such cases as these the pastoral lessees should have the lease provided they stocked the country. That concession would be preferable, provided stocking conditions were sufficiently stringent. If, as stated, the rabbits were making in a north-easterly direction, a claim for similar lenient treatment might be made on behalf of the pastoralists of the North.

MR. WALKER: Would the Premier postpone the consideration of the matter until the return of the mover of the subclause? This was a case calling for differential treatment; for the rabbits were being fenced in and not fenced out.

MR. BUTCHER: That had happened in the North also.

MR. WALKER: One squatter wrote complaining that land once considered first-class could not now carry one sheep to the thousand acres. If that were correct, was the land worth more than 1s. per thousand acres? Settlers in that part had to contend not only with rabbits but with droughts and other difficulties. Such men were the harbingers of closer settlement; and the State might well give substantial assistance to those pioneers of an important industry.

MR. BREBBER: The subclause, if passed, would place a strong weapon in the hands of those opposed to the Transcontinental Railway, since it would amount to a declaration that the country affected was not worth more than 1s. per thousand acres; that it was practically desert country. Such a contention had not been borne out by the statement of the Premier nor by the surveyors who had visited the district. If the land was not worth 5s. per thousand acres, it was not worth anything.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Seeing that the preceding speaker was prepared to secede from the Federation, the opinion of people in the other States should not matter to him; but those people would not construe the subclause as the hon. member anticipated. They knew the devastation wrought by rabbits on millions of acres of land in New South Wales; and the rents being reduced would not be interpreted as showing that

the country was a desert. The pioneers were deserving of encouragement.

MR. BUTCHER moved an amendment—

That the words "one shilling" in the new clause be struck out, and "two shillings and sixpence" be inserted in lieu.

THE PREMIER: Split the difference, making it 3s.

MR. BUTCHER altered the amendment accordingly.

Amendment passed.

MR. JOHNSON: As we had compromised with regard to the rent per thousand acres, we should reduce the minimum rental also. He moved—

That the word "three" be struck out, and "two" be inserted in lieu.

MR. A. J. WILSON suggested that the minimum rental be £3. To say that pastoralists could not afford this was absurd.

THE PREMIER: Pastoralists only paid the £3 once. The other was an annual charge. While accepting the compromise of the reduction of 5s. to 3s., the Government were not prepared to accept a reduction from £3 to £2, because it was the first and only charge the lessee would have to pay in connection with the issue of the lease, which entailed considerable expense.

MR. A. J. WILSON asked leave to move an amendment before this. Could it be done?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. A. J. WILSON moved an amendment in the proposed clause, that all the words after "three shillings" be struck out, namely—

And by striking out the words "three pounds" and inserting in lieu thereof the words "one pound."

This would leave the amount at £3, the charge in the principal Act.

MR. BUTCHER: If the Premier read Section 95 of the principal Act carefully, he would find that the £3 was intended to be the minimum annual charge for a lease. If the land taken up was so shut in by other leases as to contain an area the rental for which at 3s. per 1,000 acres would not amount to £3, according to the section the minimum annual charge would still be £3. That charge should be reduced in proportion to the reduction

of the annual rent from 5s. to 3s. per 1,000 acres, and that would overcome the difficulty.

THE PREMIER: The maximum area that could be taken up was 20,000 acres, which at 3s. per 1,000 acres would mean £3 per annum. So we could not reduce the minimum to £2. If we reduced the rent to 1s. per thousand acres, we could say that no lease should pay less than £1 per annum; but if we fixed the rental at 3s. the minimum rental must be £3 for a lease.

MR. JOHNSON: The Premier was hardly correct. It was provided that if the land was so shut in by other leases as not to contain 20,000 acres, the lessee could take up a lesser area. We should provide in that case that the lessee should not be called upon to pay rent for 20,000 acres. We should reduce the charge in proportion to the reduction from 5s. to 3s.

MR. A. J. WILSON: The absurdity of hon. members' contentions was emphasised by the fact that it was pointed out that this country would carry only one sheep to the thousand acres. Therefore was it reasonable to expect that a pastoralist was going to make a living on 20,000 acres, carrying only 20 sheep? If the country was as described by some members, 100,000 acres would be a mere bagatelle to anyone carrying on the pastoral business in a business-like way; so that a reduction of the annual charge from £3 to £2 would not be worthy of consideration.

Amendment (Mr. Wilson's) passed; the new clause as amended added to the Bill.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK.

CONSOLIDATION AND AMENDMENT.

IN COMMITTEE.

Resumed from the 2nd October; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair, the PREMIER (in absence of the Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 6 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Remuneration of trustees:
MR. JOHNSON: What salary did the manager of the bank receive?

THE PREMIER: The same salary as was mentioned in the clause, £750 per annum. Under this Bill, the manager would be the managing trustee and chairman of the board of trustees.

Mr. A. J. WILSON: In view of the fact that this Bill proposed to increase the amount that the bank would handle, and to increase the liabilities of the bank, and in view of the excellent work done by the manager, the Government should consider the advisability of increasing the salary.

Mr. JOHNSON: The operations of the bank to-day were small compared with what we expected they would be in the near future. The present manager had received £750 from the starting of the bank. If we passed the clause as printed, it would tie the hands of the Government, and it would be necessary to amend the law before the Government could increase the remuneration. If so desired, we could fix the minimum at £750. He moved an amendment—

That in line two the word "exceeding" be struck out, and "less than" inserted in lieu.

Mr. WALKER objected to fixing salaries hard and fast by Statute. It was impossible to judge what might be requisite payment for the officer five years from now, if the country went ahead as we expected it to do. If the country got under stress and misfortune it might be necessary to reduce the amount. The present manager was fully worth every penny of £750. Men were paid elsewhere in institutions of a similar character very much more. The manager's work might be very trying, and he might have to devote far more time to it and the strain on him might be far greater years hence. If we started at £750 we had no chance of rewarding him for extra services. The question would very soon arise in this country to so enlarge the bank and amalgamate it with other services of a similar character, that it would become the nucleus if not in reality a State bank. The Government should have some discretion in this matter. He supported the amendment.

Mr. JOHNSON asked leave to withdraw the amendment. While it was undesirable to make a hard and fast rule on way, it was equally undesirable to make a hard and fast rule the other way.

While we had a capable manager to-day he would not be always with us, and the Government might appoint an officer who would require educating.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. JOHNSON moved—

That in line 1 after "receive" the following words be added:—"Such salary as the Governor-in-Council may from time to time decide."

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The first amendment by the member for Guildford was objectionable, as it would be quite a new principle to adopt a minimum salary in an Act, and Parliament would have no power to reduce the amount when the Estimates were under consideration. But there was no objection to the amendment as now moved, that the amount of salary be left to the Governor-in-Council. If the amendment were inserted, he did not know whether Parliament would have power to discuss the item on the Estimates. Supposing the Governor-in-Council was to say the salary should be £1,500 a year, and objections were raised by members, the Government could turn round and say that the Bill gave authority to fix that amount. Apparently the desire of members was that the managing trustee should receive a higher salary than £750. It was impossible for a private member to move that the amount be increased, though the House could reduce as it liked. Postpone the clause until the end of the Bill and we could give the subject farther consideration. If the Government came to the conclusion that a higher salary should be granted, it would be easy to introduce a message from the Governor to provide that the sum be exceeded by a certain amount. Personally he thought the salary was fair to start with, and it would be easy at any time to bring in an amending Bill and increase the amount if we found the position was worth more and that a higher salary should be paid.

Mr. JOHNSON: The amount of salary should be left an open question. He was prepared to withdraw the amendment and let the clause remain, on the understanding that the Minister would go into it and give us another opportunity of discussing the matter.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

On motion by the MINISTER FOR MINES clause postponed.

Clauses 11, 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Certain persons not eligible to be trustees, etc.:

MR. H. BROWN: One would like a definition of the word "officer" in the third line. Would the director of any other institution, say a fire or life insurance company, which might lend moneys on agricultural lands, be prohibited from becoming manager or trustee of the bank?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It would be necessary to report progress. The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill was absent, and he (the Minister for Mines) was not conversant with the Bill in any shape or form. He moved that progress be reported.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

BILL—MINES REGULATION.

IN COMMITTEE:

Resumed from the 27th September; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair, the MINISTER FOR MINES in charge of the Bill.

MR. WALKER: There was an understanding, particularly on the Opposition side, that this Bill would not be taken to-night. Some members who had amendments to watch were away.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: A promise had been given by him to recommit the Bill. Let us go on a little while, and he would pull up when members liked.

Clause 33—General Rules:

MR. SCADDAN moved that the following subclause be added:—

Unless in the case of emergency or under exceptional circumstances, no man shall be permitted to work single-handed or be permitted to fire-out without assistance.

His main desire was to particularly draw attention to a system which was being enforced and coming into operation rather extensively, particularly in Kalgoorlie at the present time, of putting men to work in places alone, and permitting other persons to fire out alone. Recently we had had a considerable number of accidents on the Eastern Goldfields both from explosions and from the effects of dynamite fumes when individuals had been

firing out ends or other places alone. The system was one which should not be permitted to continue any longer. Any person when firing out should have some assistance, even if he was not an expert at that particular calling. When firing out an end a person had to handle a considerable amount of dynamite, particularly where machines were used, and this was an exceptionally dangerous practice. An explosion might easily occur, and a person might in the absence of assistance bleed to death. Recently a person after firing out went back to an end, and was overcome by dynamite fumes. When found he was dead. That occurred simply because no one was handy to notice the effect of the fumes upon him. He believed the Minister took up the position, or the officers advising him did so, that had another person been present on that occasion two lives would have been lost instead of one. All persons were not constituted alike. One might be overcome with fumes whilst another would not feel the effect of them for some considerable time afterwards.

MR. H. BROWN: How would the clause affect the prospector?

MR. SCADDAN: Those who used the argument that the subclause would mean that prospectors should not go out alone and prospect single-handed, only trotted it out in the hope that some members would grasp it with the object of defeating this amendment. People did not prospect to a depth of 1,000 or 1,200 feet and do it single-handed. The Minister had power under this Bill to apply the proposal to any mine or any district. Under those circumstances he could apply it to the Eastern Goldfields, and probably one or two large mines in the other districts, so that he would not impede the operations of prospectors. Certainly one man should be prevented from firing out faces.

THE MINISTER hoped the subclause would not be pressed; for though it was often dangerous to allow a miner to work alone, the subclause might be so construed as to make the management guilty of an offence if an accident happened to a platman, who necessarily worked alone, or to a man who might be trucking in a small mine. The amendment would be highly disadvantageous to prospectors, and would frequently be harsh and diffi-

cult of enforcement. Could not the Arbitration Court deal with the matter?

MR. SCADDAN: The court would not listen to the suggestion. That might be said of every general rule.

MR. HEITMANN: While it might be harsh to force mine-owners, especially in small mines, to have men working in pairs, one man ought to be prevented from firing out faces. Quite recently a man firing in a winze would have been killed but for the assistance of his mate.

MR. JOHNSON: All mining men recognised the great danger, especially in big mines, of allowing a man to work alone, especially when firing out. We could not guarantee that safeguards would not inflict hardship on someone.

THE MINISTER: The subclause would apply to a platman.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Insert "miner" instead of "man."

MR. JOHNSON: Let the Minister provide by a new rule that no miner should work alone. The other night, during a discussion on the height of stopes, certain typewritten matter, doubtless furnished by the Chamber of Mines and containing arguments against the amendment of the member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan), was distributed to Government supporters only, and Oppositionists were therefore unable to combat those arguments. If officers of the House were used to distribute those documents, a wrong was done; and if the documents were distributed by the Government whip (Mr. Hardwick) the wrong was greater, and he ought to be ashamed of himself.

MR. HARDWICK had not distributed any such documents.

THE PREMIER had not received any.

MR. WALKER: Surreptitiously to take advantage of the innocence of agricultural members in order to defeat an amendment was decidedly unjust. Were the officers of the House asked to distribute typewritten matter to one side only, while keeping the other side in the dark?

THE MINISTER: About a fortnight ago, when the Bill was being considered, certain typewritten statements were given to him, dealing principally with Sunday labour in mines. He had three copies, and gave one to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath), asking him, when he

read it, to hand it to the member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan); and at the same time he (the Minister) informed that member of the circumstance.

MR. SCADDAN: The Minister afterwards informed him that the Leader of the Opposition had been given a copy of the arguments of the Chamber of Mines against his (Mr. Scaddan's) amendment. While the Labour Government was in office he accompanied the Chamber of Mines to the Minister, and the members then asked him to accompany them on future occasions; but now there was no longer a Labour Minister for Mines, no other invitation had been received. Strange to say, the only occasion on which he had that invitation was during a Labour Minister's tenure of office as Minister of Mines. Since that time the Chamber of Mines had religiously refrained from asking him.

THE MINISTER: The Chamber of Mines had not had a recent deputation to him (the Minister).

MR. SCADDAN: A very strong deputation from the Chamber visited Perth only a few days ago, according to the Press; but he (Mr. Scaddan) could not say that that deputation had waited on the Minister.

THE MINISTER: As Minister he met them in conference.

MR. SCADDAN: Apparently it was merely a confusion of terms; he called it a deputation, and the Minister termed it a conference. It was beyond doubt, however, that the deputation when in Perth did express opposition to the amendment notice of which he had given, and he was asked to attend on that occasion. He was prepared to advance arguments in favour of his amendment; and if the Chamber of Mines had thought fit to distribute any printed matter in opposition to the amendment, copies should have been forwarded to Opposition members, and even to the member who had moved the amendment. He saw no objection to the distribution of this circular provided its distribution were general.

THE MINISTER: Only two copies were received by him.

MR. SCADDAN had seen more than two copies of the circular within the Chamber, dealing with the matter of the height of stopes.

THE MINISTER: They must then have come to hand afterwards.

MR. SCADDAN: They might have come afterwards, but it was significant that he had seen none on the Opposition side of the House. Since then he had seen another document headed in bold type, "Mines Regulation Bill," and he had expected that the Minister would have allowed the procedure adopted by the Attorney General on another occasion and asked for withdrawal of the main Bill for the time being, as had been done in the case of the Municipal Corporations Bill. With two practically identical measures before the House, he scarcely knew whether he was dealing with the right Bill.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member's set of amendments had been on the Notice Paper, and it was somewhat bigger than the other document, that of the Chamber of Mines.

MR. SCADDAN: Probably; but his Bill (amendments on the Notice Paper) contained useful provisions which would benefit the industry if passed, whereas the printing of the document issued by the Chamber of Mines was a waste of money. The document set forth that it had been issued with the object of assisting towards economical mining. In his opinion a Mines Regulation Bill must be considered from an entirely different point of view. The safety and health of the men employed in mines should be the primary consideration.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question before the Committee was the addition of a new subclause to the Bill.

MR. SCADDAN: The Chamber of Mines in their Bill—

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not enter upon a general discussion of the Bill of the Chamber of Mines.

MR. SCADDAN: The amendment provided that no person should be permitted to fire out without assistance.

THE MINISTER: Withdraw it.

MR. SCADDAN: It was useless to press the amendment. He hoped the Minister would prepare a regulation specifying a certain number of holes, say three, beyond which number it should not be lawful for a person to be employed in firing out without assistance?

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. SCADDAN: There was an amendment standing in his name on the Notice Paper, to add a subclause providing for bearers in shafts; but after consultation with the Minister he had decided not to move it, as the Minister had undertaken to introduce a new subclause dealing with the matter. There were cases where it would not be practicable to do as the subclause proposed, but except where double-decked cages were used, chairs should be so fixed in the shafts where trucks were removed from the cages that they could not be taken out of the shaft, and so that a man would not need to accept a risk by placing them in position. The provision of bearers would enable the platman to place the cage thereon before removing the truck. In some mines the practice was now to draw the cage level with the plat and then remove the truck; and it was in consequence of this practice that a recent accident had occurred at Kalgoorlie in which two miners had been injured. Had proper bearers been fitted on the plat set in that instance, as proposed in the subclause, the accident would not have occurred, because the cage would have been at a standstill and the engine-driver could not slack away and let the cage drop. His object was to prevent the occurrence here of accidents similar to those which had happened in Victoria, where the practice had been for the men to place wooden or iron bearers across the shaft. Some amendment was necessary providing that before the removal of the truck the cage should be securely placed on bearers.

THE MINISTER regretted having mislaid his draft of a subclause to meet the case. When the hon. member showed him his amendment he (the Minister) pointed out that it would not be a workable proposition in at least some of the mines. In the Kalgurli mine there was a splendid device. The bearers were fixed on the cages and they worked automatically. As the cage drew opposite the plat, the platman drew out the bearers and they rested on the plat set. If the amendment were adopted this would not be permissible. As he had not a draft of the new clause he had undertaken to introduce, he would move to report progress. The draft of the new clause would be ready for the next sitting.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

TIMBER INDUSTRY DISPUTE.

STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER.

RAILWAY CHARGES.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): Before the House adjourns, I would like to make an announcement which will I think be of very considerable interest, on a matter which has been prominent during the past few days. It is in connection with the timber dispute. The Government have decided that it is advisable to announce the amount of reduction which they propose to make in this connection. They have decided to make the following reductions in the freights now charged, and have amended the rates as follow:—On timber for export for all distances up to 17 miles, Class "A"; over 17 miles, "M" rates, plus 1s. 5d. per ton—this provides for the retention of the old rates up to 17 miles; between 17 miles and 25 miles, a reduction of from 1d. to 6d. per ton; over that distance, 6d. per ton. This, estimated on the basis of export of last year, will amount to approximately £6,000. To this must be added the remission of wharfage already in force, and which, on the same basis of last year's export, amounts to £9,200. Some small amendments are also proposed in connection with a reduction of bush haulage and storage charges, which, with the reduction of freight and wharfages, will be equal to a relief to the industry of some £16,000 per annum. These reduced rates are to come into force on Monday next. A proposal has also been made with a view to ending the dispute as early as possible—and it is a proposal which, I think, will commend itself to the men as well as to the employers—that the men should return to work at once on wages to be fixed by the Arbitration Court, the award of which will probably be announced by the end of the month, and on the basis of which the men would in the ordinary course be paid on next pay-day. Provision is made, I understand from information I have gathered from Messrs. Scaddan and Layman, for the acceptance of this offer to be followed at once by the taking

down of the notices posted at the mill by the company on the 1st October, 1906. There should therefore be every likelihood of operations being resumed on Monday next. In this connection, while I am referring to the matter, I think a word of praise is due to the efforts of two members, Mr. Scaddan and Mr. Layman, for the part they have played in connection with this dispute. The thanks of the House and of the community generally are due to these gentlemen for the manner in which they have acted, and I feel sure as the result of their offices that work will be resumed at an early date.

MR. WALKER (Kanowna): I can scarcely express the feeling of gratification it is to me to learn of the success of the negotiations of the two members—for I think it is to them chiefly that this bright prospect is due—Messrs Scaddan and Layman. I am pleased too that the difficulty which existed last week has been overcome by the Government, I mean the difficulty of the men approaching the Government and asking for lower freights. I am glad the deadlock was obviated by the good sense of the Government and the good sense of others outside. I am nowise capable of saying what the men may do, but I do say that the views expressed and the statement delivered to-night by the Premier seem to me to be reasonable, and I sincerely trust that the reasonable character of these views will be recognised, and that this great difficulty, not only affecting the men, not only affecting the great industry, but the whole of the State itself, will be removed on Monday next. I am glad to have this opportunity with the Premier of offering my personal feeling of thanks to those members who have so assiduously laboured, and I know they have constantly laboured since Saturday, in bringing about the reasonable *via media* we have heard expressed by the Premier. I can say no more, but I hope to have occasion for greater and more substantial congratulations after Monday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at three minutes past 10 o'clock, until the next day.