

the police in the Old Country are under the control of the local authorities. That puts a very different complexion on the matter. Here the police are under the control of the Government.

Mr. Robinson: Surely you do not approve of control by the city council.

Mr. SMITH: We are entitled to have from the Minister in charge of the Bill very good reasons for departing from the present system. No such reasons have been given by any member and, until they are forthcoming, I shall support administration by the local authorities. One reason why we should not appoint the police is that it will entail increased cost to the country.

The Minister for Mines: There will be no increased cost.

Mr. SMITH: We have heard similar statements before.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It will cost £5,000.

Mr. SMITH: The police control of the traffic at four points in the City is costing £1,500 per annum. If the control of the metropolitan area is placed in the hands of the police—

The Minister for Mines: You do not suggest that a policeman would be stationed at every corner?

Mr. SMITH: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Three will be required at Fremantle.

The Minister for Mines: Where are the inspectors stationed at present?

Mr. SMITH: They move all over the place. If the police administer the Act, greatly increased cost will be incurred. If the assistance of the police is required, power is given under Clauses 4 and 5.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Minister for Works does not support the amendment.

Mr. SMITH: He is supporting every amendment which is being proposed. Officers specially appointed to carry out this work are more likely to do it efficiently than are policemen, who have a hundred and one other duties to perform. I trust the amendment will not be carried.

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

Ayes	20
Noes	14

Majority for .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Maley
Mr. Draper	Mr. Money
Mr. Duff	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Durack	Mr. Pickering
Mr. George	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Sir H. B. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Rocks
Mr. Collier	Mr. Smith
Mr. Foley	Mr. Troy
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lutey	Mr. O'Loughlen

(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Progress reported.

MESSAGE—ASSENT TO SUPPLY BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to Supply Bill (No. 1), £1,561,000.

House adjourned at 10.59 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 10th September, 1919.

	PAGE.
Urgency Motion: Railway trucks, shortage	521
Questions: Immigration negotiation, papers	524
Education, School Books	524
Agent General's Office and Emigration	524
Harapton Plains Company	524
Leave of absence	524
Return: Railway Department	526
Bills: General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act	
Amendment, report...	524
Divorce Act Amendment, Com.	526
Crown Suits Act Amendment, Com. report	526
Justices Act Amendment, Com.	526
State Children Act Amendment, Assembly's amendments	531
Droving Act Amendment, 2r.	532

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

URGENCY MOTION—RAILWAY TRUCKS SHORTAGE.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West) [4.35]: I wish to move the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency.

The PRESIDENT: I have received a communication from the hon. member stating that he wishes to bring under the notice of the Chamber a matter of urgency regarding the shortage of railway trucks at Fremantle. The urgency of this matter requires testimony by four members rising in their places in support thereof.

Four members having risen in their places,

The **PRESIDENT**: The hon. member may proceed with his motion.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West) [4.37]: In moving the adjournment of the House I wish to draw the attention to the fact that last week I asked the leader of the House if he was aware that the boats "C.J.S." and the "Almora" were delayed at Fremantle owing to insufficient wheat being available to load. The reply was that there was no undue delay. On Monday a vessel arrived at Fremantle with 6,000 tons of Newcastle coal and started to unload. On Tuesday, owing to the shortage of trucks 100 men had to be discharged for the time being from that boat. On Friday next a large steamer is arriving to take a full cargo of wheat, every bag of which will have to be run alongside by trucks, and next week we are expecting 16,000 tons of coal, a large quantity of which will have to be unloaded into trucks, while two large boats, one from New York and one from London, with general merchandise, a very large quantity of which will be loaded into trucks for Kalgoorlie, will also arrive, and if it is impossible for the Government to supply trucks at present when there is little work in connection with the shipping of wheat and other commodities, I would like to know what will happen in the next two or three months when things get busy at Fremantle. Things have been bad on the wharves for a considerable time. Everybody is looking forward to a boom, and if we are now hung up through the want of trucks, that position will not be in the best interests of the port of Fremantle or of Western Australia. The coal is badly wanted and other commodities which are coming in are badly wanted, and there should be no necessity for the country to be inconvenienced by waiting owing to the shortage of trucks. I hope the leader of the House will be able to give a little more satisfactory reply than he gave last week. The people of Fremantle are anxiously waiting. If there is a shortage of trucks, that shortage should be rectified. If it is a question of administration then it is a matter for the acting Commissioner to deal with. I have no wish to go into the matter any further. I hope the leader of the House will be able to furnish an adequate reply and that in future there will be a sufficient supply of trucks. I move—

That the House adjourn at its rising, until 3 p.m. on Friday.

The **MINISTER FOR EDUCATION** (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.41]: The hon. member left information to-day at my office that he intended to move the motion, and I have here what information I could get in the time: The Chief Traffic Manager has submitted a report as follows:—

Coal boat "Chronos" discharging at Fremantle September, 1919. Regarding the discharge of coal for the shore ex

"Chronos," I have to report that on 2nd instant the following letter was received from the ship's agent:—"We have to advise the steamer 'Chronos' took her departure from Newcastle at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 28th ultimo, with a full load of coal, namely 6,044 tons for discharge into railway trucks at Fremantle, and is due to arrive at the latter port on 7th instant. We would thank you to make the necessary arrangements to make provision for an adequate supply of trucks. Signed J. R. Brown, manager, Howard Smith, Ltd." No mention whatever is made that any overtime, ordinary or extraordinary, would be worked, and without notice of any kind the agent expects to be accommodated with approximately 225 wagons every 24 hours until his ship is discharged, which is equivalent to 1,700 tons of coal net per day; this means we would have to supply approximately 300 wagons in 3½ days to the ship, and when it is remembered that the discharge is considerably less per day than the loading you will recognise the unreasonableness of submitting such a demand for wagons without notice. As an illustration of this take the Perth gas service: their discharging capacity is 250 tons per day; this means it will take five days to discharge their portion of coal of 1,200 tons after the first rake reaches the siding, which would be the day after ship had commenced unloading. Equal to 150 wagons of loco. coal was for the country, and not one of these wagons would be again available for the ship. In addition to this ship we had heavy orders at Fremantle; 100 wagons per day were required there for cargo ex sheds and ships, the wheat scheme required 120 wagons at Spencer's Brook daily to load wheat for export, and the South-West orders were equal to 150 per day; the flour boat loading at Albany called for 150 to 200 wagons to handle that cargo. To meet the position special trains with empty wagons were run and everything possible was done. I could have kept the ship going all night last night, but there was the possibility of being short of empties to-day; that being so it would have been unwise to continue after 12 midnight. To-night the ship will work through, and the prospects of its discharging continuously until finished are good. This boat commenced discharging 10 a.m. Monday 8th, and up to Tuesday midnight loaded 310 trucks, approximately 2,300 tons net of coal, and very few of these had been discharged in time to return to North Fremantle by 7 a.m. to-day for reloading. The statement that the country is starving for coal may be quite correct, but within 24 hours of the ship discharging the consumers had supplies at their door, so the position was immediately relieved. Had the agent notified me of his desire to work 24 hours, I would have made special arrangements

to that end, and could have done so, but when empty wagons are in heavy demand throughout the system it is a common practice to restrict ships' discharge to jetty hours.

I am sure hon. members will realise that after there has been a suspension of work for many weeks, there is bound to be a certain amount of congestion and, in these circumstances, and in view of the failure of the agent to specify that he wanted extraordinary accommodation, I do not think the Railway Department are at all to blame for what has happened.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [4.46]: This is the first intimation I have had that the hon. member proposed to move his motion and I learn for the first time that there has been a shortage of trucks at Fremantle. During the past three months I have had a considerable amount of business with the department, involving the use of some thousands of trucks, and, in justice to the department, I must say that, since I have been in the State, I have not known them to give greater satisfaction in the handling of any goods I have been interested in. I do not know all the circumstances attending the shortage of trucks at Fremantle, but I wish to pay this tribute to the Railway Department for the manner in which they have handled a very heavy volume of business during the past three months—a manner which reflects very great credit on those responsible for it. I know what a large number of trucks is necessary to cater for ships that desire quick despatch, by working right through, from commencement to final discharge, and what the leader of the House has told us is quite correct. If it is desired to work steamers continuously, it would not require many boats with a capacity for 6,000 or 7,000 tons of coal to use the whole of the available rolling stock in the State. If the coal is being consigned from Fremantle to the country and it is impossible within the short space of the vessel's stay to return the trucks to Fremantle, the number of trucks required would be far in excess of what the State could possibly supply. I realise it is essential to the good name of the port that prompt despatch should be given to ships, but I also realise that, if it is desired to give a ship prompt despatch, especially when such a large number of trucks is required as in this case, adequate notice should be given. The shortage of coal generally has been great, and to expect to be able to dump that large quantity in the port within three or four days and have all the trucks necessary to carry it away is to expect too much. The State has to provide for more than one or two steamers, and if called upon by agents to handle timber and other commodities in the same urgent way, the demands upon our rolling stock would be impossible. The work of the transport department during recent months reflects the greatest credit upon those concerned, and in saying this, I

am speaking from first hand knowledge, for I know the heavy volume of business and the creditable manner in which the work has been performed.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [4.50]: I am pleased an opportunity has been given to address ourselves to the question of trucks. As to the merits of the case mentioned by Mr. Panton, I know nothing. But in face of the fact that the railways are not paying, and, as Mr. Dodd pointed out the other day, that there is a large deficit each year, it seems that sufficient provision should be made to supply the requisite trucks to handle all the business that is going. Whilst I know nothing about the coal or the shipping at Fremantle, I know a little about handling stock, and I know there has been a great difficulty at times to handle the stock, so much so that quite recently the Railway Department had to pay a fine because they were unable or unwilling to provide the trucks for a certain number of stock, and the trucks had to be procured from the much maligned Midland Railway Company. I merely wish to point out that the supply of trucks for stock is quite inadequate. It is very pleasing to hear Mr. Lynn say that in his particular line of business everything is exceedingly satisfactory. I am sorry to think that, while ample provision is apparently given to some industries, the stock industry is not catered for to the extent it ought to be. I am the more pronounced in my views at the present time because, on the line from Geraldton to Murchison there is a very severe drought, and the only possible hope of a lot of station owners to save themselves from very severe loss is to avail themselves of a fair number of trucks and remove their starving stock to another part of the State.

The Minister for Education: The demand is abnormal on account of that.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: If the railway system is to be run properly, there should be sufficient trucks to meet an abnormal demand. But the department is starved for trucks. I have been informed that the number of trucks available for stock is quite small. If the Government are going to monopolise the handling of stock and everything else, they should make provision for an ample supply of rolling stock. A private company has to look ahead to see what is required, and make the necessary provision to meet requirements. To-day a great amount of stock is starving and dying, and there is an enormous demand for trucks, and yet the stock cannot be handled. If it is desired to make the railways pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund—I am not referring to Mr. Dodd's proposal to tax unimproved values—the Government should provide ample trucks. We are indebted to Mr. Panton and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to make these remarks on behalf of those unfortunate

men who probably will be ruined by this drought.

The PRESIDENT: I would point out that the motion for the adjournment is made in connection with the shortage of railway trucks at Fremantle.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West—in reply) [4.55]: In view of the explanation given by the leader of the House—and I thank him for his promptness—I beg leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

QUESTION—EDUCATION, SCHOOL BOOKS.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY asked the Minister for Education: 1, In view of the high cost of school requisites, will the Government arrange to have all school books printed in the State, with the object of reducing the cost and creating more employment in the printing trade? 2, Will the Government consider the advisability of granting at least one free issue of books to children in each class?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, The Government have had this matter under consideration for some time, and experimental work is now being undertaken. The copy-books in use in the schools have been printed in the State, and the Government Printer has the preparation of a reading book in hand. 2, The Education Department already provide free stock in the shape of reading, history, and geography books for use in the schools. It is not considered advisable at present to extend this issue, on account of the great expense which would be involved.

QUESTION—AGENT GENERAL'S OFFICE AND EMIGRATION.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH asked the Minister for Education: Whether the following statements by Mr. W. Faraday, a recent immigrant to Western Australia, as reported in the "West Australian" of the 3rd September, are correct:—"Callers at the office of your Agent General get the curt intimation—'We are not sending anybody out at present.' No offer to take your name and address, and let you know when they can get you a passage, though it was mentioned that there were 10,000 names of prospective immigrants on the books. . . . The Western Australian agency would not even send out my money for me. . . . The most your people would do for me was send me to an agent who would book me to Western Australia via Canada. . . . There is no mining information available at your office. They admit there is nobody on the staff who knows anything about mining. I tried in vain to get any information about mining matters. There was not even a copy of the 'Kalgoorlie Miner' in the place; and though there

was a file of the 'West Australian,' the latest loose copy was seven months old."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: The Premier has read the statement referred to and is calling for a special report upon the matter from the Agent General.

QUESTION—HAMPTON PLAINS CO.

Hon. J. E. DODD asked the Minister for Education: 1, How many acres do the Hampton Plains Company hold on the Coolgardie goldfields—(a) freehold, (b) leasehold? 2, What price per acre was paid for the freehold? 3, What rent is paid for the leasehold? 4, If the area is a concession, for what purpose was it granted? 5, Does the title give the company the right to the minerals on the property?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, 216,000 acres in fee simple. 2, Various prices totalling £27,000. 3, Answered by No. 1. 4, Granted in June, 1890, whilst this State was a Crown Colony in order to facilitate settlement of the locality. 5, The agreement gave the company the right to take out permits to work the minerals, subject to the payment of a royalty of two shillings per ounce on all gold. This royalty was subsequently released by "The Mining on Private Property Act, 1898," conditionally on the company framing regulations for the acquisition of mining tenements on the concession. For the information of hon. members, the Minister for Mines has forwarded me, to place on the Table of the House, a resume of the position, with copies of the Act referred to and the regulations issued by the company.

QUESTION—IMMIGRATION NEGOTIATIONS, PAPERS.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Education: When will the papers with regard to the immigration question be placed on the Table as directed by this House?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The resolution of the House was forwarded to the department for the papers. I will make inquiries. I did not know that they had not come forward.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, leave of absence for three consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. Ewing (South-West) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILL—GENERAL LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Hon. J. Nicholson in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Periodical payments in lieu of attachment:

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: This is the first of the clauses of this Bill bringing into effect here the English law regarding restitution of conjugal rights. It is quite an innovation, and a very important one. It is not merely a change with a view of rectifying an anomaly. In the division which took place last night only a small number of members were present. I believe the majority of members did not expect the division on the second reading last night. Therefore, in order to test the feeling of a fuller House, it may be necessary on one or two of the more important clauses to call for divisions in Committee. I should like to ask Mr. Nicholson whether he has consulted in any way with any of the heads of the religious denominations in this State regarding the present Bill? In a matter of this kind it would be merely courteous to furnish them with copies of the Bill and inquire as to their views. I appeal to the hon. member not to do anything that would rush so important a change in our social affairs. Marriage has always been regarded as much more than a mere civil contract. I ask the hon. member not to go on with the Committee stage until we have the views of the heads of the churches. Moreover, time should be allowed to hon. members to frame amendments. One amendment I desire to move is that insanity caused by child birth should not be regarded as a cause for divorce. I feel quite sure Mr. Nicholson would fall in with such an amendment. It is all very well to say that we have had this Bill before us for a week or two, but the majority of the public do not take much interest in what happens in Parliament. The measure should be brought directly under the notice of the people. Perhaps Mr. Nicholson will agree to postpone the Committee stage until we have further information as to how the subject is regarded outside this House by those whose opinions would be of value to us.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not communicated with any religious body or with any other body regarding this Bill, for the simple reason that I had no conception, nor do I understand now, that it is necessary or desirable that Bills coming before this House should be circulated amongst the electors generally. I think Mr. Kirwan will agree that it is a very difficult matter to say who exactly should be consulted on the subject. The Bill was read the first time on the 20th August.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: What does the first reading mean?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The first reading calls attention to the fact that the Bill is

coming forward. Moreover, on the 21st August there appeared in the Press a special notice calling attention to this Bill. Therefore, the public have been fully informed. Indeed, some of the women's organisations communicated with me regarding the Bill and I actually directed the chief messenger of this Chamber to send a copy of the Bill to an organisation which specially asked for it. To representatives of other organisations I explained the effect and purport of the Bill in the same way as I did here on the second reading. Therefore, we should not be advancing matters even a single stage by circularising the heads of religious bodies. The second reading of the Bill was moved by me 10 days ago, and then Mr. Kirwan moved the adjournment of the debate, not, as usual, to the next sitting of the House, but for one week. I raised no objection to that adjournment, because I felt that the hon. member might consider it desirable to consult bodies with which he might be associated. In the light of this explanation I hope the hon. member will agree that there has been no unseemly rush in connection with this measure. As to this particular clause, it is the first of the clauses which represent a transcript of the English Act of 1884. It is an old clause in England, and we should have had it in our divorce law years ago.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I shall take very good care that the heads of the religious denominations are supplied with this clause, and with this Bill, and with the extraordinary speech to which we have just listened. It is difficult to express in moderate language the feelings that will be aroused, I will not say by this Bill, but by the speech which we have just heard on this clause. Of course the heads of the religious denominations are entitled to have the Bill, and to go through it clause by clause, and to give it a great deal more consideration than apparently its mover is prepared to give it. I have sent copies of the Bill to the head of the Presbyterian Church, amongst others, though sufficient time has not yet elapsed to allow of a reply being received in each case. I have here the reply of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Western Australia, a person of some importance, who should especially appeal to certain members of this Chamber. When clauses of the nature of this one appeared in the English Divorce Bill of 1857, Mr. Gladstone said that they were probably the most important legislation proposed to be placed on the English statute-book since the Reformation. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of these clauses, and especially of this particular clause. This is what the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia says—

In answer to your letter of the 3rd September, let me say the Presbyterian Church has persistently opposed all legislation which tends to lessen or make less sacred the marriage tie.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: He has set ideas, so it is of no use his discussing the Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is a great pity that more have not set ideas. That the heads of the churches are not given an opportunity of expressing an opinion on this Bill is a perfect outrage.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: They have had ample opportunity.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: They have had all the amplitude of opportunity afforded by an obscure paragraph in a newspaper! The letter continues—

Each succeeding Divorce Bill goes just a little further in that direction, and the result on national morality is deplorable. Marriage is coming to be regarded as a union which can be lightly entered into and as lightly broken. Our church stands firmly on the ground that there is only one valid cause for divorce. To make insanity a ground for divorce, seems to me a grave mistake.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine his remarks and his reading to Clause 2.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Every word I have read thus far is very pertinent. The Council should be given a fair opportunity for dealing with this matter. There must be no rushing the Bill through. On this clause I think we can fairly take a division on the Bill as a whole.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I support the clause as it stands. I have listened to the objections to the provision. One of the grounds advanced for delaying consideration of the clause is that the heads of religious bodies have not been notified of the Bill. I have yet to learn that it is the function of an hon. member introducing a Bill to notify anybody outside the House. I do not know that the heads of religious institutions are the sole guardians of such legislation as this. An ecclesiastical marriage is invalid until celebrated in law.

The CHAIRMAN: We are discussing periodical payments in lieu of attachment.

Hon. J. CORNELL: To reject the clause or postpone it on a subterfuge would be wrong. Let us accept it or reject it on its merits, and not on the advice of outsiders.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I suggest that the mover agree to report progress so that the clause, with others, may be referred to the ecclesiastical authorities spoken of. Not that I believe it concerns them alone. I think we are perfectly within our rights in dealing with the Bill without waiting for outside advice; but in all legislation affecting unions or other societies that has come before the House I have always asked the leader of the House to adjourn the debate so that those concerned might be consulted, and I have never been refused. We should give to those concerned the fullest opportunity for expressing their opinions. There is nothing to gain by rushing the Bill.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: As I was not present at the second reading I should like to say merely a few words in regard to the Bill on general lines. The three points brought out in the memorandum are three strong grounds for divorce. As to the letter read by Mr. Sanderson, we can quite understand that, possibly, the Moderator has the strongest possible views against divorce in any form. I believe there is one religious denomination whose clergy will not hear of divorce in any circumstances whatever. Therefore, it is impossible for them to discuss the question, and probably the Moderator has the same strong views. I intend to support the clause. I am strongly of opinion that legislation of this kind should be enacted by the Federal Parliament but, knowing how slow that Parliament is to deal with such matters, we are justified in taking these steps.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Mr. Dodd suggested a postponement to permit of further consideration. I have no wish to rush the Bill through and, if members desire a postponement, I shall offer no objection.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

RETURN—RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I desire to lay on the Table a statement of the comparative results of the working of the Western Australian Government railways for the past five years. This return is a very interesting one and I have obtained copies for circulation among hon. members.

BILL—CROWN SUITS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 23—agreed to.

Clause 24—Principal Act to be printed as amended:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Do the Government intend to supply justices with copies of the Act? Hitherto this has not been done, but it is very necessary in view of these amendments, that those appointed to honorary positions and who are expected to take an active part in administering the Act, should be furnished with copies.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I shall bring the suggestion under the notice of the Attorney General.

Clause put and passed.

New clause—Amendment of Section 6:

Hon. J. E. DODD: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 3:—"Section 6 of the principal Act is hereby amended by inserting after the word 'justices' the words 'male and female.'"

It is questionable whether the Government, under the measure, have power to appoint women justices. I understand the Solicitor General has expressed doubt on the point. The amendment would make it clear. No argument should be needed to induce the Committee to agree to the proposal. We appoint women to try cases in the Children's Court and, if they are competent to deal with children, they should be competent to sit on other cases.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I do not think that is a strong argument.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I think it is one of the best arguments. They are more competent than anyone else to deal with children who are entering upon life—I wish I could repeat a quotation of one of the poets dealing with this subject, in which the poet says that it is a more awful thing for a child entering on life than it is for a man going out of it. However, I see no reason why a woman should not be given the right to administer the law which she has to obey. I remember when the question of women police first came up, the idea was laughed at. If anyone has given satisfaction in connection with the administration of the law it is the women police. They are doing splendid work, and the carrying of this amendment will not lay down any hard and fast rule that the Government shall appoint women justices. It will give the Government the right to appoint women justices if it is desired to appoint them. One of the cruellest things in connection with the administration of the law is to see a young woman brought into the court for sexual offences and to have to face a court full of men. In such a case to whom can that young woman turn for sympathy or consolation? We recently had such a case in the Supreme Court. Surely in a case like that women justices might, at any rate, preside in the police court in the first instance.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I intend to support the amendment, and I desire to emphasise the remarks the hon. member has made with regard to the services which are being rendered by the women police. Up to quite recently it was considered that women were not capable of filling such positions. As a member of the Justices' Association of this State, and having taken a keen interest in the work of that association, which comprises nearly 300 members, I know that no objection will come from that association with regard to this matter. The members of the association are fully aware that it was intended to move in this direction. Mr. Dodd has already referred to the fact that women are filling positions in the Children's Court. They are not known

as justices of the peace, but merely as members of the Children's Court, and in that connection they have done splendid work.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Could not men have done as well?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I question whether men would delve as deeply into child life as women do. Reference has been made to the position which has been filled by the women police. Some time ago I was a member of the select committee appointed by this Chamber to deal with the State Children Act, and the occasion presented itself to permit that committee to examine the women police, and on that occasion they tendered evidence which has been distributed to hon. members. It cannot be gainsaid that they are fulfilling the important duties they have been appointed to discharge to the entire satisfaction of the community. They have been able to deal with cases referred to by Mr. Dodd with more tact than it would have been possible for a man to do. We also know that old female offenders, those who have grown hard and callous, are willing, and ready to listen to advice tendered by women police. The time has arrived when we can with credit to the womenfolk, and with credit to ourselves, extend to women the full privileges in the direction pointed out by the amendment.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I intend to oppose the amendment. A good deal has been said about women who attend the Children's Court and women police. There is a marked difference between the two. Women police act under the direction of the Commissioner of Police, but if we appoint women as justices of the peace no one will be able to dictate to them as to what cases they shall deal with. I agree that women are more competent than men to handle children, and if Mr. Dodd provided that women should deal with specific cases only, I would support him. But to appoint women to deal with every case is out of the question. The function of women is to increase, multiply, and replenish the earth. There comes a time in a woman's life, when she is in that condition, that she would not be fit to take a seat upon the bench. We had evidence this afternoon that there comes a time in a woman's life when, through complications, she may become temporarily insane. It is known that some women at this particular stage become hysterical.

Hon. J. Cornell: So do some men.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: To put such women on the bench and ask them to decide highly legal points would result in bringing the justices' bench into ridicule. If we carry the amendment proposed by the hon. member we shall be looking for trouble, and for that reason I intend to oppose it.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Cornell last evening asked me to ascertain

whether this amendment was necessary, whether women could be appointed as justices of the peace under the Justices Act as it at present stands.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I said the Crown Solicitor held they could.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There is nothing to specifically prohibit women being appointed, but if the question the hon. member puts to me is this, Can they be appointed with certainty that their appointment will stand, then I am bound to say no. The Interpretation Act, Section 26, says—

Every word of the masculine gender shall be construed as including the feminine gender.

Section 3 of the same Act says—

In the absence of expressed provision to the contrary this Act shall apply to every Act of the Parliament of the State heretofore or hereinafter passed, and to every regulation made under any such Act in so far as (a) any provision of this Act is inconsistent with the intent and object of the particular Act or regulation to be interpreted.

In the Justices Act the words used in Section 6 are—

The Governor may appoint such and so many justices as may from time to time be deemed necessary to keep the peace in the State of Western Australia or in any magisterial district therein.

It does not say "persons," and it may be argued that, as the Constitution says, "every word of the masculine gender shall be construed as including the feminine gender," there is no feminine gender. And in connection with Section 3 of the same Act, which I have just quoted, it might further be contended that the intention and object of the Justices Act is to appoint men as justices. I take it that is all the hon. member wants. I am not in a position to say whether the appointments would stand.

Member: Can you say whether the Government are in favour of it?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I was not asked to express any opinion. I do not know that the Government have any objection to women as justices.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I think the matter is of such importance and wide-reaching effect that we should have been given a little more time to consider it. I am absolutely opposed to women being justices of the peace, or going on to the bench at all. They are taking a place in men's work for which they are not fitted either by training or sex. To put women in the position of justices, exercising a high judicial position with the liberties and funds of men at their command, would not be fair. It is not advisable that they should undertake these positions. The position of justice of the peace is an important one, disposing of the liberties and moneys of the public. There are plenty of men who are not fitted for such positions. There

are a few women who would be suitable as justices, but it would be difficult to select the right ones. Reference has been made to the Children's Court. I am of opinion that this work could have been carried on just as well by men. But there were women who took an interest in children's welfare, and the Government, probably to keep them quiet, appointed them. Women have votes now, and people are afraid to say "no" to anything they ask. The clever women are asking for positions that only the few are capable of adequately filling. I intend to oppose the amendment.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I outlined the position fairly well last evening. I am not wedded to my amendment on the Notice Paper drafted by the Crown Solicitor. Mr. Dodd's amendment will serve as well. I am not going to try to convince Sir Edward Wittenoom. There are many arguments why women should be justices of the peace. Women are not disfranchised from wearing the crown of England. The argument that women are not fitted, from a sex and temperamental point of view, for the exercise of the functions of a justice of the peace could equally be applied to debar a woman from being Queen of England. Once we recognise the right of woman to exercise the franchise, it places her on the pedestal of full citizenship, and to say then that she is not fitted to perform similar judicial functions to men is a contradiction. I am not concerned so much with her sex or temperamental fitness as with the embargo which man has placed on woman. I am at a loss for a reason why that embargo should be placed on her. It was once said by a learned counsel that if the admission of women to the bar did little else, it would allow of the admission of some young women where previously there were none but old women. I believe that applies also to justices of the peace. In the appointment of men as justices no question of intelligence or capability of the individual to fill the position is required. I now come to what the Minister for Education has said. The law as it stands, as interpreted by the Minister in consultation with the Crown Solicitor, is ambiguous. All the amendment asks is that this ambiguity shall be removed, thus placing out of the question an appeal to the law courts, and saying definitely that either men or women may be appointed justices of the peace. Whereas the crop of good capable men is almost exhausted, there is a wide field for the appointment of intelligent women as justices of the peace.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Mr. Duffell has stated that the Justices' Association have raised no objection to this new clause. However, as the proposal was not in the Bill as introduced, but has been sprung on the Committee, the association have never

had an opportunity of either approving or disapproving of this new clause.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The association have repeatedly considered the phase of the question involved in the new clause, and on several occasions they have heard women justices of the Children's Court in regard to matters affecting that court.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I support the amendment, and am rather surprised that some hon. members should regard women as incapable of filling the office of justice of the peace. After the past five years, such a view is astounding. The war would never have been won had it not been for the capabilities of the women who took the places of the men in Great Britain and France.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I oppose the amendment, though not because I regard women as incapable of filling the office of justice of the peace. I agree with the last speaker that during the war women proved themselves capable of working in factories with men. They might be able to work in the mines here with men, but one would not advocate their doing so. In the case of the Children's Court the few women justices are doing good work, just as the few police women we have are doing good work. But we do not want police work generally done by women. If we put women in the positions which men should occupy, we shall destroy that refinement which we so much admire in women. Why should we drag women down to the level of men?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: From Mr. Duffell's latest remarks I understand that the Justices' Association, of which I am not a member, have had some women justices from the Children's Court before them. But let us know clearly whether the association have, as an association, considered this new clause, and if so whether they have come to a decision for or against the proposal.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I thought I had made it clear that no opposition had been raised by the Justices' Association to the provisions of this Bill. The measure was brought forward on the 20th August. Had the association entertained any objection to it, they would have voiced that objection through members of the association who are also members of this Chamber. Women justices appeared before the Justices' Association when certain proposed amendments of the State Children Act were being considered by that body. Moreover, women justices have on more than one occasion been admitted to the council of the association when certain matters were being considered. The women of this State have proved themselves as capable as the men of handling even judicial questions. In the new dispensation resulting from the great upheaval of the war we have to attune ourselves to changed conditions. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The impression created as to the views of the Justices' Association on this new clause has been removed by the admission I have extracted from Mr. Duffell that it was the Bill as introduced by the Government that was before the Justices' Association and met with their approval. But this clause was not in the Bill when it was considered by the association, and therefore we do not know whether or not they approve of the proposal.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am at a loss to know why Mr. Holmes should throw out a smoke screen regarding what the Justices' Association consider we should or should not do on this Bill. As, according to his own statement, he is not a member of the Justices' Association, why should he worry about what the association would or would not approve?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But we have been told that the Justices' Association approve of this proposal.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am a justice of the peace, but I am not a member of the Justices' Association; and, if I were, that circumstance would not invest me with any prerogative to declare how the legislature should amend existing legislation relative to justices of the peace. If that is one of the reasons for the existence of the association, the sooner the Government suppress the association the better. The work done by women has not only earned historical recognition, but has saved to the British-speaking countries and to the men in particular, the honour of being justices of the peace. But for the part the women played, the Hun would have been master to-day, and some of our antiquated justices of the peace would be walking in the road instead of on the footpath. If there is anything that savours of insanity, it is to do what the old lady of the fable did—to try and brush back the waves with a broom. I hope the Committee will approach the matter not from the standpoint of expediency or temperament, or sex, but from the only proper standpoint, the age long custom and tradition by which men usurp the right to hold women in bondage should forever be banished. We are living in a new era. Women are responsible for the birth of that era and for its progress, and let us give them what we, if we were in their position, would be asking.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: I have listened carefully to the debate, but I have heard nothing to convince me that it is essential to have this innovation. Most men would not care to have their womenfolk hearing some of the cases that come before the bench. I think the majority of women would not thank us for giving them that right. The women have done noble work, but I do not think this is any compliment to them. The Children's Court fits them to a nicety, but to sit on the bench is a widely different thing. I certainly will vote against the amendment.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I do not think any member will be influenced by the argument that because women have been so useful throughout the war, it has qualified them to take positions on the bench. In most cases women's work in the war has been in physical directions.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not at all.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I think so. When we ask them to go on the bench we are giving them work that requires a trained mind. It has been said that this is a privilege. Positions as justices of the peace should not be dispensed as an honour or a privilege, but because the recipients are specially trained and fitted for the work. Mr. Cornell has asked us to remember that we have a Queen of England. But the Queen is hemmed in by restrictions, and cannot go beyond the advice of her constitutional advisers. Therefore that example is no argument. I think women should to a large extent confine themselves to domestic concerns, where there is quite sufficient for them to do. There is certainly sufficient domestic work for the married ones, and the single ones have not as a rule sufficient training for work on the bench. Regarding the question raised just now about the Justices' Association, I am the one referred to as a vice-president of the Justices' Association. This association so far as this Bill is concerned, and particularly this amendment, have not had it brought before them. I am a regular attendant and as there has been no meeting for two or three weeks, I do not think this amendment can have been before them. When matters do come before the association it is just as well for them to give their advice. Mr. Dodd said it was very embarrassing for a woman to be charged before a court constituted of men. If so, a court constituted of men might be useful as a deterrent, just as the use of the "cat" was in cases of garrotting some years ago. The appointment of women police is admirable. In some cases they can do much good of which men would be incapable. Among our magnificent Australian women, we can always find a few amazons who make splendid police and, when a little force is required as well as persuasion, can bring it to bear. Training and experience, however, are needed for the bench and women, from their avocations and general work, are not fitted for it. I admit that lots of men are not fitted for the office of justices, but that is the fault of the selection and there is no reason why we should emphasise any disadvantage by the appointment of women. In the circumstances I cannot support the amendment.

Hon. H. CARSON: I support the amendment because we have given women the franchise, which carries full citizenship and, therefore, they should not be debarred from any office they can attain in the State. The Government would be very careful whom they appointed as women justices, but they should have the privilege to make such appointments, particularly in thickly populated parts like the metropolitan area. It would

be better to have women justices to decide women's cases. Very few men are fitted by training for the position of justices, and far too many are appointed not because they will be useful to the community but as a matter of honour, for political reasons.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Women's claims to the right to be appointed justices must not be determined by their services during the late war. The women themselves would not like their claim to be based on that. Their right must be determined by their capacity and capabilities, shown in the past in departments which fit them to fill such an office. I have seen something of women's work, and am constrained to regard their claims with favour. The various spheres in which they have been engaged entitles them to serious consideration. Being possessed of the franchise, they surely are entitled to the claims of full citizenship. When we think of the many professional offices women are filling, medicine, law, and others, and the honours they have attained, we must admit they have shown marked capacity and are possessed of qualities which would fit them, as well as men to be justices. I agree that many justices are not as fitted as some women would be to discharge the duties, and it would be a good thing if there were some sort of examination to which prospective justices could be subjected before being appointed. I do not believe in the present haphazard mode of making the appointments. It is bad in principle, because it has been hinted it is done for political purposes sometimes as a reward for services in political matters. No one should be appointed to an office for rendering such services. Any appointee should be fully capable of discharging the onerous duties—for they are onerous—and, if women are appointed, they should have to undergo a similar test and prove their capability to fulfil the duties. If the Government regulated future appointments by selecting the men or women most competent to fill the office, the occupants of these posts would give greater satisfaction than in the past. I support the amendment.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The amendment simply gives the Government the power to appoint women justices if they think it desirable. The Government should have this discretionary power. It does not necessarily follow that women will be appointed to the bench. There are many women who are competent to exercise the duties of justices. Many have taken an active interest in public affairs since women have had votes. Some cases which come before the courts, in which women are the defendants, might be better dealt with by women than by men. Women are found in all the learned professions, and there is no occupation from which they are excluded. The innovation of women police has been introduced, and it was a wise one. When women are considered competent to exercise such important duties, we should not stand in their way of assisting the work of the judicial bench. It will be entirely a matter

of Government administration. There are many women who would be incompetent, just as there are incompetent men, but I would not say there are no women competent to exercise the duties of justices.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Would you sooner be tried by a woman or a man?

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: In some cases a woman might administer justice more fairly than a man. I know some women by whom I would sooner be tried than by some men of my acquaintance. I intend to vote in favour of the amendment and I will have to trust not only this Government but to future Governments that in appointments they may make the selections will be wise.

Hon. H. STEWART: It has been admitted that the present Act leaves an indefinite position as to whether female justices can or cannot be appointed, and it is desirable that there should not be anything indefinite with regard to Acts of Parliament. There is no member who would not be prepared to admit that there are cases which come before the courts, to hear which it would be advantageous for women to be on the bench. The amendment gives power to the Government to appoint women justices and one result which will follow the giving to the Government of that power will be that as such a large number of appointments to the commissions of the peace are made, and in many instances made ill advisedly, this power to appoint women as well as men will cause the Government to give more consideration to the matter of appointments. Recently in Great Britain and in the United States, women have been admitted to follow the profession of law. That is simply a preliminary step towards fitting them for higher judicial functions. If this amendment is carried, as I believe it will be, and it is considered that appointments of women justices should be limited to special types of cases, it will be within the power of the Government to bring forward an amendment and get the opinion of the House. I intend to support the amendment.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: I am a whole hogger for the full rights of women. Women are already policemen and we propose to make them justices of the peace. Throughout my professional life I have had the opportunity in many ways of learning the value of the work which women are capable of doing, whether it be as medical women or as nurses, or in other capacities. I have also had the privilege of sitting with women on various important bodies such as the University Senate, and I deny entirely that women are not fitted for the exercise of judicial functions. I think that the appointment of women justices will make for good.

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

Ayes	14
Noes	5

Majority for	9
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AYES.

Hon. H. Carson	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. J. Mills	(Teller.)
Hon. J. Nicholson	

NOES.

Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. J. A. Greig
Hon. H. J. Saunders	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Amendments.

Schedule of 19 amendments made by the Legislative Assembly now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3.—Strike out the words "a child committed to an institution," in paragraph (1), and insert the words "convicted child" in lieu thereof.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The original definition of "State child" reads, "A State child means a destitute or neglected child received in an institution, or a subsidised institution, or apprenticed or placed out under the authority of this Act." In the Bill as it left this House that definition was amended by the insertion after the words "neglected child" of the words "or an incorrigible or uncontrollable child or a child committed to an institution." In another place the Bill has been amended by striking out the words "a child committed to an institution" and the insertion of the words "convicted child" in lieu thereof. I am inclined to think the intention of this amendment is quite right, but I do not think the wording of it is altogether fortunate, because "or convicted child" would mean that if a child were convicted of, say, throwing stones at a neighbour's window, he would automatically become a State child. I ask the Committee to approve of the Assembly's amendment with a modification, namely, that "convicted child" be struck out and "who has been convicted as such" inserted. That, I think, would give effect to the intention of another place. I move an amendment on the Assembly's amendment,

That "or a convicted child" be struck out and "who has been convicted as such" inserted in lieu.

Amendment on the Assembly's amendment put and passed; Assembly's amendment as amended—agreed to.

No. 2—Clause 4—Insert after the words "a special magistrate" the words "or any member of the children's court authorised in that behalf by the Governor."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In Clause 4 it was provided that a special magistrate should have the right to enter, visit, and inspect any institution. During the discussion on the Bill in this Chamber it was urged that any member of the court should have the right to visit any of these institutions. Exception was taken to that, and in another place the same question was raised. Finally a compromise was arrived at which I think very reasonable and proper. It is proposed to insert the words "or any member of the children's court" authorised in that behalf by the Governor. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I do not rise to oppose the amendment, but it is an extremely thin Committee, and I think that to give an opportunity for comparing the amendments with the Bill, the leader of the House should consent to reporting progress.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—DROVING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [8.37] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is essentially one for consideration in Committee, one in regard to which it is not necessary for me to say much on the second reading. The Droving Act was first introduced for the purpose of protecting owners of stock through whose property travelling stock might have occasion to pass. Were it not compulsory for persons in charge of travelling stock to notify proprietors of property through which they wished to pass, much mixing of stock and consequent trouble would occur. By the provision for the giving of notice, this is to a large extent avoided. When the Act was originally framed in 1902 it was only made applicable where stock had to travel a distance of 40 miles or over, but with the closer settlement of the State it is now considered desirable that this distance should be reduced to 20 miles. This reduction in distance is one which will be appreciated by stock and property owners, particularly in the South-West of the State, where sheep farming is now an extensive industry and where the Act in its present condition, applying only to the droving of stock for a distance of over 40 miles, might often be inapplicable. The drover, by being provided with a correct waybill showing the particulars of stock under his charge, is able to satisfy any person who should be anxious to inspect his herd and ascertain that there is

no stray stock amongst those he is droving. The placing of the responsibility on the drover for any stock that might be in his possession will cause him to exercise every care in seeing that he has nothing but his own stock under his charge. The provision of a clause for the yarding of travelling stock when a yard is convenient is necessary for the purpose of closer inspection, as it is not always possible at certain periods to distinguish brands at a distance. Another provision will make it possible for an owner to forego the travelling T brand if his sheep are legibly branded with his own registered wool brand. A new clause has been submitted by which drovers will be required, where a stock route is provided, to traverse that route and not deviate on to a person's holding without the sanction of the owner or the manager thereof, except when the destination cannot be reached by a prescribed stock route. The necessity for a clause of this nature has been brought about by the fact that drovers have not confined themselves to declared stock routes, and consequently losses of pasture and stock have been occasioned in many instances to a number of owners of property through which travelling stock has passed. The alterations that have been made to the Act have been for the most part suggested by the Pastoralists' Association and the Bill is, I think, in accordance with the desires of pastoralists generally. Although there are not in the Bill very many amendments to the existing Act, it has been found necessary, owing to the altered conditions of settlement, that the Act, which was passed in 1902, should be revised. I think I am correct in saying that the late Mr. Septimus Burt had a large hand in the drafting of the provisions of the Bill, a circumstance which I am sure will favourably commend it to hon. members. To my mind it is purely a Bill for consideration in Committee and, fortunately, we have in the House several members who are much more familiar with the conditions than am I. I have no doubt it will be closely scrutinised in the Committee stage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [8.43]: I have pleasure in supporting the second reading. The remarks with which the leader of the House has moved the second reading leaves me very little to add. I confirm his statement that the Bill has received the approval of the Pastoralists' Association, whom it very closely concerns, and that it was practically drawn up by the late Mr. Septimus Burt, who not only had some skill in drafting measures, but also had large experience in connection with stock. From my knowledge of it, the Bill seems to be satisfactory in the case of large bodies of travelling stock, although

I cannot say quite so much for it in regard to smaller bodies. However, it refers only to stock travelling over 20 miles. None of the precautions are necessary in the case of stock moving about within a distance of 20 miles. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.44]: I desire to support the second reading. To my mind the Bill fills a long felt want. The fact that the measure has been practically compiled by the late Mr. Septimus Burt will go a long way towards convincing hon. members that in perusing the Bill they will find a spirit of equity from beginning to end. I do not think there is scope for much discussion either on the second reading or in Committee. The Bill appears to have been carefully and equitably drawn, and it is one which I believe will fill a long felt want. I am convinced that it will meet the wishes of the majority of members of this House.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Hickey, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.47 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 10th September, 1919.

	PAGE
Questions: Timber prices	533
Buller river reservoir	533
Coal deposits, Irwin river	533
Water Supply, Loan Estimates	533
Andinach case, compensation	534
Repurchased Estates, protection	534
Pastoral Leases, Sandstone	534
Education Department, Inspectorship	534
Wheat as article of diet	534
Veneral disease patients	534
Soldier Settlement Estates repurchased, papers	535
Bills: Constitution Act (1889) Amendment, 1r.	535
Constitution Act (1889 and 1899) Amendment, 1r.	535
Pearling Act Amendment, 1r.	535
Return: Police Department, Secret Service Fund Papers: State Sawmills, projected sale	535
Motions: Wheat production, price guarantee	538
Agent General's Office, Secretary and Emigration Officer	555
State Smelting Works, treatment of ores	556

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

QUESTION—TIMBER PRICES.

Mr. MUNSIE asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has his attention been drawn to an article which appeared in the "Sunday

Times" on the 7th inst., under the heading "An Impending Timber Boom," in which the following paragraph appeared:—"Only last week the timber companies, including the State sawmills, decided to raise the price of timber 12½ per cent. all round, which means that there will now be a further rise in the cost of building, with a corresponding increase of rents"? 2, Is the information contained in the above paragraph correct? 3, If not, will he take the earliest opportunity of contradicting same through the Press?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, This is not considered necessary.

QUESTION—BULLER RIVER RESERVOIR.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Works: 1, What was the reason for discontinuing work at the Buller River reservoir? 2, Is it intended to recommence the reconstruction of the reservoir? 3, If so, when? 4, If not, what is it proposed to do in order to provide an adequate supply of water for Geraldton for industrial and household purposes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Pending Engineer O'Brien's report and recommendation on the value of the site for the purpose. 2, See No. 1. 3, See No. 1. 4, Full and exhaustive inquiries are being made, and it is recognised that Geraldton has claims which cannot be ignored.

QUESTION—COAL DEPOSITS, IRWIN RIVER.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has any agreement been completed between the Mines Department and the Midland Railway Company in connection with boring for coal on the Irwin River coal deposits? 2, If so, what are the particulars of the agreement? 3, If not, (a) what steps are proposed to be taken by the Mines Department to thoroughly test the value of the coal deposits at Irwin? or (b) what amount will be made available to assist private individuals or companies to do so?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, The department has undertaken to put down bores to thoroughly prove the extent and value of the deposit, subject to the Midland Company consenting to the department having the right of access to their land for such purpose. We are awaiting a reply from the company, which is expected at any moment.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, LOAN ESTIMATES.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Works: 1, How much of the £20,000 estimated as required for "Water Supply for Towns generally," on the Loan Estimates