

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 17th July, 1907.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

QUESTION—SEAMEN'S ACCOMMODATION ON STEAMERS.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Is there an inspector whose duties are to see that proper healthy accommodation and other facilities are provided for the crews on steamers trading to the North-West Ports of this State from Fremantle? If so, with what department is the inspector connected, and his name?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, under the Navigation Act of 1904; 2, Captain Morrison, of the Harbour and Light Department.

QUESTION—DISEASED MEAT, ALLEGED SALE AT KALGOORLIE.

Mr. BATH asked the Premier: 1, What action has been taken by the Government with regard to the allegations concerning the sale of diseased meat in Kalgoorlie and Boulder? 2, In view of the general feeling of alarm and uncertainty engendered by such rumours, supported as they are by affidavit, will the Government carry out the erection of the projected abattoirs for the Kalgoorlie and Boulder district in the most expeditious manner?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Every inquiry has been made: and with a view of securing the most rigid supervision, an additional inspector has been sent to Kalgoorlie. 2, The survey of the site has been completed, plans of the buildings are in hand, and tenders will be called for the abattoirs this month.

QUESTION—STATE AGENCIES IN AUSTRALIA.

Mr. BATH asked the Premier: What is the cost per annum of the West Australian State Agencies respectively in Sydney and Melbourne?

The PREMIER replied: Sydney, nil; Melbourne, about £900.

DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to intimate to the House that I propose to nominate the members for Subiaco (Mr. H. Daghish), Perth (Mr. H. Brown), and Claremont (Mr. J. C. G. Foulkes) as Deputy Chairmen of Committees during the session.

EXPLANATION AS TO SENATOR PEARCE.

Mr. J. SCADDAN (Ivanhoe): I desire to make a statement on a point of privilege. Yesterday evening and during the debate on the Address-in-Reply, the hon. member for Coolgardie made certain statements concerning an hon. member of another House, namely the Senate of the Federal Parliament. He referred to Senator Pearce and the expenses which the Commonwealth had incurred for postal and telegraphic messages which he had sent. At the time this statement was made by the hon. member for Coolgardie I expressed my doubts as to its accuracy, and therefore this morning I telegraphed to Senator Pearce informing him what was said on the matter. I have received from him the following telegram which I think it is due to the House that members should hear:—

"Statement by Eddy absolutely inaccurate. Only return public Senate papers, Vol. 2, shows my expenditure postages £12 11s. 8d.; no other return in existence; challenge him produce it. Thanks for information."

The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) stated that during the first 12 months after election to the Senate, the expenditure by Senator Pearce on postages and telegrams cost the Commonwealth £75.

[*Mr. Bolton: £70.*] I think he said £75. However, this telegram will show that the statement made by Mr. Eddy was absolutely incorrect, and I think a withdrawal is necessary and that the member should apologise to Senator Pearce for making such an inaccurate statement. This instance merely shows what we have to put up with at times from members quoting figures without first taking the trouble to verify them.

Mr. EDDY (*Coolgardie*): With regard to this matter, I may say that the figures which I quoted appeared in the Press of the country. [*Labour Members: What Press? Name the paper.*] Just allow me—you are all so fond of bickering and jumping when a man gets up to speak. I wish to tell members that at this moment I will make no apology and no withdrawal; but I will at the earliest possible moment find out what particulars I can, and if I am wrong I shall be the first to apologise.

PRIVILEGE—PRESS REPORTS.

Farther Statement by Mr. Holman.

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN (*Murchison*): With respect to the motion I moved yesterday, I am in receipt of a telegram from the office of the *Coolgardie Miner* newspaper, as follows:—

“Regret inaccurate report supplied by Perth correspondent *re* your speech. Correcting same to-morrow’s issue.—*Kneebone, Coolgardie Miner.*”

I desire to thank that gentleman for his promptitude in sending this wire, showing that it was purely his Perth correspondent who was to blame. As regards the leader in this morning’s *Herald*, I do not think it worth while to delay the business of the House by taking any farther action, for it is quite evident from the manner in which that leader is written that the paper is unable to distinguish between criticism and a malicious lie. I shall therefore take no action, for a newspaper that cannot make such a distinction is unworthy of any consideration at all.

SUPPLY BILL, £639,303.

All Stages.

Message from the Governor previously received, recommending the appropriation out of Consolidated Revenue and Loan Funds of the sum of £639,303 for the services of the year ending 30th June, 1908, was now considered in Committee.

On motion by the *Treasurer* (Hon. Frank Wilson) that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply—

Mr. T. BATH (*Brown Hill*) said: While it was essential for the Treasurer to secure temporary supply, why should the Standing Orders be suspended to permit the passage of a Bill through all stages in one day? Surely the Treasurer knew last week that supply was needed, and could then have given notice, so that the Standing Orders might be adhered to. Members should have some information as to the date of the Budget Speech and the introduction of the Annual Estimates. In view of the great importance of the financial position, members and the country were entitled to an earlier consideration of the Budget and the Estimates than was afforded last year, and perhaps to the fulfilment of a promise made on various occasions by the Treasurer, that in each succeeding year he would endeavour to have his financial proposals introduced at an earlier date.

Question put and passed.

In Committee of Supply.

Mr. Illingworth in the Chair.

The TREASURER moved—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the services of the year 1907-8 a sum not exceeding £639,303.

In asking the Committee to grant temporary supply and pass a Bill through all stages at one sitting, he was simply following the invariable custom in this State. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) was well acquainted with the procedure, and knew that to take a Supply Bill through its various stages day by day would involve a delay of seven or eight days. He (the Treasurer) was anxious to secure before the

end of the month the authority of the House for this expenditure, and to have the Supply Bill before the Legislative Council when it met on Tuesday next, so that the Bill might before the end of the month receive the sanction of His Excellency; else there might be delay in paying salaries, for instance, which represented the bulk of the moneys to be voted in the schedules. That might be disastrous, and perhaps inconvenient to members themselves if they could not get their salaries at the end of the month. As to the date of the Budget Speech, he could not make a definite announcement now.

Mr. Johnson: Do not make any rash promises again.

The TREASURER would not make a rash promise; he would express a pious hope that his colleagues, by supplying the figures for their several departments, would enable him to get his Estimates framed, considered, and reconsidered, so that they might be ready for submission to the House at the end of next month, at any rate before the expiration of the period for which this supply was sought, namely two months. Notwithstanding that last year's Estimates were brought in later than was anticipated, they were not very late as compared with those of previous years. Were not the Estimates submitted during the latter part of October? [*Mr. Walker:* They were promised in July.] The hon. member knew that the books were not closed for the year till the 10th July, after which balances had to be taken out and all the data compiled. Without such data the Estimates could not be framed, and the data for expenditure at least were not available to Ministers until perhaps the end of July.

Mr. Johnson: Let us have the Budget by the end of August at latest.

The TREASURER: Officers in the departments had their routine work to do, and work on the Estimates was extra. We must allow them a reasonable time; and though he agreed with the hon. member that the Estimates ought to be ready at the end of August, not much exception could be taken if they were presented a week or two later. If at all possible, he would deliver the Budget Speech before

the end of next month (August). This Bill was framed in the usual way, the appropriation being based on one-sixth of the total estimated expenditure out of revenue and loan for last year, and the sum was asked for to enable the Government to carry on until the Estimates were submitted.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): While the Treasurer would not yet give a promise for the introduction of the Estimates, if he was in a position to bring them in before the end of August, that would be a step in advance. The question of the introduction of the Estimates should not be regarded as a matter of levity on the part of members.

Mr. Daglish: It was a matter of piety.

Mr. BATH: What we desired to avoid was a repetition of things which took place last session, when Ministers sat back in their chairs and with the attitude of some Eastern dictator said "These Estimates"—amounting in the case of the Mines Department to £500,000, for example—"have got to be pushed through in one night, without any regard to the nature and importance of the votes."

The Treasurer: You forget the reason for that reply.

Mr. BATH: There was no justification whatever for such a reply, and there could be no justification for any Minister attempting to push through such a vote in such a brief period in one night, and absolutely refusing to give members information on that vote. That was the position he wanted to avoid, and if it could be avoided by an early introduction of the Estimates it would be better for members and better for the State, whose interests we were supposed to serve by our deliberations in this Chamber.

Mr. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): The point he wished to draw the Treasurer's and the Committee's attention to was that the policy of spending money from loan funds on roads and public buildings was still being carried on, and apparently was to be perpetuated during the course of the present financial year.

He desired to protest against the principle of voting loan funds and utilising loan funds for the construction of non-productive works. He noticed in the schedule under the loan fund, items for both roads and bridges and public buildings. [Interjection by *the Treasurer.*] It was not a vote which he approved of last year, but it was a vote recommended to the House last year.

The Treasurer : The Hon. member agreed to the vote.

Mr. DAGLISH : It was a bad principle, and he was sorry to see it continued. He was sure the House would forgive the Treasurer if he transferred the expenditure to the Consolidated Revenue account during this financial year. There was another point, too, that was worthy of consideration by the Committee. We were asked to embark on a loan expenditure this financial year representing £1,170,000. If the vote now before the Committee was put as one-sixth of the expenditure for the present year, speaking in close figures £1,180,000 would apparently be the loan expenditure of this financial year. The State was not justified in spending that money from loan funds, and the Treasurer was not justified in bringing forward a Supply Bill that embodied such a large loan expenditure as was represented by one-sixth of what was intended to be the total of the financial year's operations. It is quite impossible to do anything in the direction of expressing an official opinion by the Committee at this stage on this matter ; but before the Treasurer brought forward his Budget it was to be hoped he would be able to assure the Committee that the loan expenditure would not be anything like the amount that the Bill apparently represented it as probably amounting to. The Treasurer would have to give very careful reconsideration to this question of loan expenditure and reduce it considerably below the level the Supply Bill proposed to provide.

Mr. T. WALKER (Kanowna) : The member for Subiaco had in part emphasised the objection there was to

Temporary Supply Bills ; but greater than that was the objection altogether to the system that was becoming so customary, of introducing these temporary supplies. The Leader of the Opposition drew attention to the fact that last year the Estimates were introduced at so late a period that members were compelled to pass an enormous sum of money without any consideration. The evil of that was great, but the evil of having to pass the Supply Bills without any items and without any knowledge but the assurance that the sum was provided on the rate of last year, generally month by month, was an evil very great indeed. We were entitled especially to watch the expenditure at this particular stage of our history ; we are drifting more and more daily towards the rocks. We should not be expected to vote blindly such enormous sums as were represented in this Supply Bill, more particularly as the member for Subiaco had pointed out ought we to be cautious in launching out on a policy which inferentially, as he said, was to be continued throughout the financial year. We did not want to vote generally sums of this description : we wanted to know what the money was for, where we were embarking to, and what was to be the end of this sort of thing. Here generally as in the Supply Bill we were voting blindly, and we could not do otherwise than commit ourselves to what we could not remedy when sooner or later the Government brought down the Estimates. We could not possibly give an intelligent vote on a question like this. It was an evil at any time to resort to Supply Bills, and an evil we had had promises of remedy for during last session, and which evil was repeated this. Last session we had to submit to this evil in consequence of a direct breach of faith on the part of the Government, on the assurance that the Estimates would be brought down, not at the earliest possible moment, but at a definite date.

The Treasurer : On the expression of a hope.

Mr. WALKER : No ; there was then no expression of a hope ; this was the

expression of a hope. Last year the Treasurer did not even express a hope; this year he had come to pious hopes; and we knew what the hopes were worth—they were not worth the bubble of a boy blowing soap through a pipe. We received a promise—there was no hope expressed or co-mingled in the promise—when the House adjourned the session before last, that Parliament was to be called together at an early date to consider the Financial Statement at the proper season of the year. That was what was definitely promised, and on that assurance the House allowed the Treasurer to take measures without consideration—railways scattered almost broadcast throughout the country, after allowing the House to adjourn on the direct and positive assurance of the Government that we should have the Estimates down at a reasonable time within the month of August; yet the month of August passed, and the next month, with hope running through the Treasurer's mind; and it was close on the end of the year before we were able to consider the Estimates. They were not properly considered, they could not be properly considered, nor would they ever be properly considered when the Government came down and demanded that a big department should be run through in the course of one sitting of the House. He (Mr. Walker) entered his protest now, not only as to the expenditure we were asked to vote blindly, but also as to the time of bringing down Supply Bills. In the same way last year we were promised an early meeting of the House this year; but it was now July, and goodness knew when we would get to the Estimates. All the assurance we now have was the Treasurer's pious hope.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported; report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

On motion by the Treasurer, resolved "That towards making good the supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1907-S, a sum not exceeding £441,513 be granted out of Consolidated Revenue Fund of Western Australia,

and £197,790 from moneys to the credit of General Loan Fund."

Resolution reported; report adopted.

Supply Bill.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, a Supply Bill was introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson), in moving the second reading, said: I should like to explain briefly to members that if they oppose the second reading of this Bill, they will be taking a course that has never been taken before. The fact that certain sums of money are provided temporarily out of loan funds does not commit the House to the expenditure of a like sum during every two months of the financial year. Of course the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) knows that very well. The bulk of the loan moneys provided to be expended in this Supply Bill for temporary supplies is for unexpended balances of the votes passed last year to complete works. There is a number of works; I cannot give them all; but there is the Collie-Narrogin Railway, for which we have to provide £13,000 for a couple of months' expenditure; also the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway and the Donnybrook-Preston Railway, both being constructed out of loan funds, which we must carry on, because we must pay wages. Similarly, we have £6,000 for the Greenhills-Quairading Railway. We have the commencement of the Hopton-Ravensthorpe Railway, the first mile of which is under construction departmentally in order to get material landed, so that tenders may be called and so that contractors may get a fair start.

Mr. Johnson: Are you going to that extent now—giving a fair start? Why do you not hand the State over to them?

The TREASURER: Certainly, we are giving them a fair start, in the interests of the State. We are going to have the railway material landed on the ground; and the hon. member knows well that it cannot be landed on the jetty, that it must be carried inshore some dis-

tance in order that we may get lower tenders for the construction of the work. That surely appeals to the House. We are taking a precaution any reasonable business-man would take to get cheap construction for the State. I hope the hon. member does not object to that course. Then we have the Beaufort Street bridge for which £7,000 is provided. The work has been started. We have also the Fremantle station, and some duplications being carried on out of loan funds, and there is £50,000 for rails and fastenings which are taken from stores as required, and which have to be paid for. [Mr. Daglish: Is this more than two months' supply?] Some works in the items will be finished, but this amount is about two months' supply on the items I have mentioned. There is two months' supply required for the contractors on the Bunbury Harbour Works, representing about £8,000 which has to be met. In addition, we have improvements to jetties in the North-West now being carried on. [Mr. Taylor: Are all these items from loan funds?] Yes. We have also water supply, boring for water on stock routes, and sewerage for Perth and Fremantle in progress, the expenditure being estimated at something like £18,000. [Mr. Johnson: What about roads and bridges?] I cannot give the details of that item; it is a matter of £1,007. Is it reasonable for members to ask me to supply details of that. [Mr. Johnson: Then what about public buildings?] The bulk of that vote I take it is in connection with the Claremont Lunatic Asylum. [Mr. Johnson: And the Old Men's Home.] There is a contract there also. [Mr. Angwin: And additions to the Public Library.] That is another; and I thank hon. members for reminding me of some of these contracts. Perhaps other members will also remember some items being carried out in their electorates. It is unusual in a measure of this sort to supply details, as hon. members know. The Schedule in fact has been attached to the Bill, though the usual custom for many years was to ask the House to grant a proportionate supply till the Estimates were carried. It is only of late years that the Treasurer

has put in details. I do not know that they are of any use to the House at this stage, and we might just as well leave them off in future; but I have thought it well to follow the practice established by my predecessors in office. I do not know whether the member for Subiaco was the first Treasurer to do it; I think he was. [Mr. Johnson: Why do you not follow other examples of the hon. member?] I am doing exactly as he did, except that he put his measure through more expeditiously than I have done. On one occasion he put through a Loan Bill for £750,000 in two nights. I am certainly giving the House more time and more information than the hon. member did.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee on Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Schedule A.—Consolidated Revenue, £441,513:

Division XXVIII.—State Batteries, £15,228:

Mr. JOHNSON: It was impossible to stop the passage of this Bill, as the Treasurer must have money to carry him over until prepared to submit the Estimates; but the objection of members of the Opposition to passing Supply Bills was that in doing so they practically endorsed the policy of the Government to which policy they were opposed. Last session there was a short discussion on the administration of our State batteries. A board appointed to inquire into the administration of the State batteries, and to see whether the method existing could be improved on, had reported; but through some fault of members on the Opposition side the discussion on the report was not entered into until the Estimates were reached; and unfortunately for the House and country, it was late in the evening when the discussion commenced, at a time when members were not in the best temper to discuss a question of this magnitude. He (Mr. Johnson) was never in a worse temper than he was that night, and possibly in consequence of this and the bad temper shown by the Minister for Mines, the report did not get that

in contemplation it should have received. It set out that the faulty administration was due to the continued interference of the Minister. There were twenty or twenty-four cases cited where the superintendent of batteries had erred in judgment owing to the interference by the Minister and other superior officers. What the board practically said to the Minister was that he could withdraw his continued interference and allow the administrator to have

free hand so as to enable success to be achieved. During the recess the Minister appointed a man to the head of the department at a salary of something like £300 a year. If the Committee passed the schedule to the Bill it would mean that we would be endorsing the Minister's action in that appointment, and to this he took very strong exception. There was no justification whatever for the appointment, and it was useless for Ministers to preach economy and then to appoint unnecessary officers at high salaries. It was questionable whether the officer was competent for the position, but even if he were, there was no justification for the appointment. [*Mr. Johnson*: He might whitewash the Minister; and the other officers would not do that.] One did not want to go into that subject, for he had enough of that trouble last session to suit him for a considerable time. The Minister by his action failed to study that economy which he should have done. The administrator should have been given more opportunity of displaying the ability he possessed, but which he could not give an example of; he did not get a fair chance. We would not allow the Minister to use the fact that the schedule of the Bill had passed the House as an argument that his action in appointing the superintendent of batteries had been endorsed.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : The fact of the hon. member allowing the vote to go through would not in any sense prevent him on another occasion from expressing a full opinion on the whole question of the State batteries system. The hon. member should give notice of motion so that the report of the Batteries Inquiry

Board might be thoroughly discussed. [*Mr. Johnson*: Will you give us a select committee?] No; he would not allow a select committee to deal with his administration in the matter. If a motion in that direction were brought forward he would be prepared to combat the arguments that might be used. A notice of motion could be tabled to deal with the report on the State batteries system; and he was as eager as any member to have that system perfected so as to get value for the money expended. He did not think the question should be debated even on the Estimates, and it would be far better, instead of taking time up then, to discuss it on a motion before the House. [*Mr. Johnson*: It was what he desired.] He hoped the hon. member would bring forward a motion to have the board's report considered, and every facility would be given to the House by the production of papers and reports so that all information might be obtained on the question.

MR. TAYLOR : Notwithstanding the remarks of the Minister about the necessity for allowing the item to go through, and the suggestion that another opportunity should be taken to discuss the public batteries system, he desired to enter his strong protest against the manner in which the public batteries system was being conducted. He intended to continue that protest early and late on every possible occasion. He objected to some of the salaries which were paid and especially to that of the gentleman who was appointed over the head of the previous superintendent of batteries. The inquiry had cost something like £1,200; but he had considerable trouble, and was forced to argue in the House on two occasions, before he was able to get the report printed. The only opportunity of dealing with it was very late last session, when the Estimates were under consideration. The Minister had believed that the board would exonerate him and crush some one else—the superintendent of public batteries for instance—but it did not do that, for it found that the system had gone wrong owing to interference by the political chief. He took it that that meant the Minister. As the

system had practically grown up in the State since the present Minister had been in office, the major portion of the blame was due to his administration. The temporary appointment of Mr. Dunstan was only made to dodge the Public Service Commissioner. A Minister had the power to make temporary appointments; and evidently he thought that in view of the Batteries Inquiry Board's report the Public Service Commissioner would not have accepted a permanent appointment. He intended on another occasion to give more facts in connection with that appointment and the positions previously held by the officer who received it. He had never seen that officer in his life, and did not know him; but he knew that he had been in Ravensthorpe before the smelters were sold. [*The Treasurer* : What is the matter with that place?] The Treasurer and the Government would know more about that smelter before long. Would Mr. Dunstan's knowledge of smelters enable him in any way to control the battery system of this country? And what credentials had that man to be appointed over the head of the then superintendent? This information should be given by the Minister and, in addition, he might tell the House what improvements the new officer had suggested as to the working of the battery system, and how his system had succeeded. It had not been a success in his (Mr. Taylor's) district. There was no justification for the appointment of Mr. Dunstan at a salary of £600 a year. This was but one salary, however, and it would be idle to think they should block all the other salaries which had to be provided for the sake of this one. They would be able to deal with the salary of that officer when the Estimates were under consideration. All that a member could do in the House, seeing the majority behind the Government, was to enter his protest, and he would do that when the Estimates were under consideration. [*Mr. Bolton* : It might be different this time.] His experience taught him differently. The exhibition at the time of the Education vote last session was enough to condemn the Government and those who supported

them, not only now but for all time. There was no chance of that majority acting differently on this occasion. He hoped the Minister would give the House the credentials of the new officer and the reason why the appointment was made. The Minister could not justify the appointment in the face of the report by the Batteries Inquiry Board. [*Mr. Bolton* : But he could by a division, though.] That was the only way, by "brutal majority." [*The Minister for Mines* : You appointed him to an equally good position.] The appointment that that officer received was not in connection with public batteries; it was to a smelter, and would the Minister say that a man, because he was proficient in smelting, knew all about how to take charge of a public battery system? There was no comparison between the two cases, for a man might know about batteries and the treatment of ore containing gold, and if he were put on a smelter he would be at an absolute loss. Was there not a practical illustration at Anaconda, where workmen were robbed of their wages and left to starve, the Government having to go to the rescue? Yet today the Anaconda mine was proving a success and paying dividends, because it was managed by an experienced smelter. For public battery management also special knowledge was required, and an efficient smelter was not necessarily an efficient battery manager. Mr. Dunstan had given no increased facilities to the prospectors, and it was questionable whether his employment made any difference to the public. Let all members join in trying to put the battery system on a sounder basis.

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN : During the past few months Mr. Dunstan had reported on the 8-Mile, near Meekatharra. [*The Minister for Mines* : No; he had not made the report.] This officer's salary, £600, would be better spent in assisting prospectors. The leaseholders at the 8-Mile, which had turned out a great deal of gold, asked for a State battery, and an official report was made which was or ought to have been favourable.

The Minister for Mines : That would come within the province of the State Mining Engineer.

Mr. HOLMAN : No ; Mr. Dunstan made the report. He (Mr. Holman) wrote to the Minister and received a reply dated the 20th June last, that the development of the district was not far enough advanced to justify the erection of a plant, and that a thousand tons could, as a test, be crushed by either the Nannine or Meekatharra batteries at a minimum charge of 10s. per ton ; that in a few months the matter would be reconsidered ; and that the inspecting officer suggested that heap back freights could probably be obtained on stone to Nannine. But the men working low-grade mines could at any time take advantage of the minimum charge. Their complaint was against having to pay 12s. a ton for cartage. The prospectors, to whom the departmental letter was then forwarded, relied that the information as to the ten-shilling minimum was unnecessary, as that was the minimum all over the fields ; that the suggestion of cheap back freights to Nannine was altogether absurd, in view of the class of light express wagons which did nearly all the carting on the road, while the big wagons averaged about one a month and six tons to the road, so that a hundred-ton parcel could hardly get through in the year. The prospectors wished to test low-grade stuff, and quoted as a practical illustration on the cleaning up of 125 tons at the North Revenue mine for an average of 9 dwts. over the plates. The 9-dwt. stuff would leave a margin, after paying carting and crushing, of only 13s. 6d. per ton at £4 an ounce, so none but the fairly rich man could afford to take the risk. The prospectors held that they should have a trial run of a thousand tons on a sliding scale starting at, say, 10 dwts. s., up to a maximum of 10s. per ton.

Division XXXIV. — Railways and ramways, £208,962 :

Mr. JOHNSON : Attention should be drawn to the retrenchment proceeding in the Working Railways. Economy in administration was necessary, but mere

reduction in expenditure was not economy. To the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner he had strongly objected, because that appointment was made under a bad system. Mr. George, during his five years' term of office, sustained many attacks ; but while Ministerial was preferable to Commissioner control, Mr. George was hardly so much to blame as the system. Mr. George was the most loyal servant any Treasurer could have, his sole desire being to swell the revenue at the expense of people's pockets. To the question of administrative economies Mr. George had devoted much attention ; and it did not appear that he was not a better judge of the number of officers needed in the service than was Mr. Chinn, the new authority on the subject, or Mr. Short, now Acting Commissioner. Mr. George had effected numerous economies ; but since he left office dozens of officers had been dismissed from the service, and others retrenched or disrated. The Government had evidently been influenced by the criticisms of Mr. Chinn who was not a great authority, and this criticism was not conclusive evidence. He took exception to the Government adopting as conclusive evidence the criticisms by Mr. Chinn, which had evidently influenced the Government, for they had issued instructions to the Acting Commissioner to cut down salaries and reduce the wages sheet. In spite of the fact that the Acting Commissioner denied that old servants had been dismissed and retrenched, still he (Mr. Johnson) knew that old public servants with 10 years' service had been dismissed ; this proved that Mr. Short's statement that he was not interfering with the permanent hands was not correct. One did not take exception to retrenchment, but objected to the rule of thumb method being adopted as we had seen during the last few weeks. If Mr. Short thought that retrenchment should be carried out, why did he not effect these economies before, as he was Mr. George's right hand man. We were going a bit too fast, we needed economy but we wanted judgment, and he did not think judgment was being exercised at the present time. Mr. Short had not

had time to go into the relative merits of the staff, and in his (Mr. Johnson's) opinion officers had been dismissed who had been more loyal and attentive to their duties than those whose services had been retained. We did not want Mr. Short to say that he had made a name for himself by exercising economies and when he was probably looking after another position. Our working railways might suffer through the wholesale reduction and retrenchment which was going on. He did not believe in the present policy but he believed in retrenchment, after sound judgment. The Acting Commissioner was showing very unsound judgment in a lot of his disrating and dismissals. The Minister should give a little attention to the matter and see that the working railways did not suffer. Mr. Short evidently wished to make a name for himself by reducing the staff because Mr. Chinn had criticised our railways.

The TREASURER (Hon. F. Wilson): Every member must recognise that reductions and economies could be effected in the railway system. The member for Guildford would give the Government credit that as far as they could see justice would be meted out to everyone. Some men had been retrenched, and many of the retrenchments were under consideration before Mr. George left the department. Mr. Short was only carrying out the policy that was being effected before Mr. George left. Members should give the responsible heads of departments some credit for discrimination. If a man was placed in a responsible position like the Chief Mechanical Engineer, he must have discretionary power as to dispensing with the services of men. The whole retrenchment was being undertaken by the responsible heads. Some mistakes might be made, but if this was not done then we should undermine all discipline, and good-by to all administration. Last year members attacked the Printing Office in the same way, and he (the Treasurer) would be able to give information on that point when speaking on the Address-in-Reply. The first thing was to get a capable manager in whom he (the

Treasurer) had confidence, and then to trust to his discretion in nearly every case.

Mr. Bolton: Why was the same not done in this case? Why not wait until a competent manager was appointed?

The TREASURER: Expenditure on the railways was far too great.

Mr. Bolton: And had been for a long time.

The TREASURER: The hon. member surely did not want to perpetuate that for another 12 months. The Committee would agree with the view he (the Treasurer) had enunciated that we must have confidence in the heads of departments. If we lost confidence in those heads then we should get rid of them. As long as they were there the Government must trust to their judgment.

Mr. Bolton: Was not the Acting Commissioner head of a department all the time?

The TREASURER: Certainly.

Mr. Bolton: Then why were not the economies effected then.

The TREASURER: The hon. member has just been told that a number of these retrenchments were already under consideration and some had been decided on even before Mr. George left office, so that the action was being taken then.

Mr. Collier: Mr. Chinn's report came out and fixed matters up.

The TREASURER: Mr. Chinn's report had no influence on the Government. Mr. Chinn was evidently a man who could write a clever and capable article, but his criticisms had no influence whatever on the Government, and members could disabuse their minds of that.

Mr. G. TAYLOR: In the newspapers which informed the public that the services of the Railway Commissioner were to be dispensed with was a notice that Mr. Short would be Acting Commissioner for six months, and also that 200 railway employees were to be dismissed. That was two or three weeks before the Commissioner left his office—about the first or second week in June. He (Mr. Taylor) wished to be fair to Mr. George, although he had opposed the appointment, still he had discussed this matter

with an ex-member of Parliament as to the attitude of the Commissioner in leaving office, and issuing instructions for wholesale dismissals to take place. And he asked the question, had the railway earnings gone off suddenly, or was the Commissioner leaving a post and was frightened that his successor would come in and find 200 or 300 men doing nothing but drawing their salaries? It was idle for members to say that because a person was working for the Government his services could not be dispensed with. He (Mr. Taylor) recognised that there would be hardships where economies were being effected, and all the hardships which came under his notice he would probe to the bottom, and see that justice was done. He did not say the Government should not use the pruning knife where they were justified in doing so. As far as the first batch of railway servants who were retrenched was concerned, Mr. Short had no more to do with the dismissals than as head of his department—as the Chief Traffic Manager. After the years of experience Mr. Short had had in the railway service, if he was not capable of advising the Minister now, his time had been lost on the railways; but Mr. Short had given the whole of his time to railway management, and if he could not run the few miles of railways which we had successfully, then he should be got rid of. One believed Mr. Short to be a capable man, and at the end of six months it would be found that he had been successful and equal to the occasion. If it was possible when making the appointment of Commissioner not to go outside the State—if a man could be found who was capable of running the railways, then the Government should take that matter into consideration.

Mr. Bolton: The Government were not going to have a Commissioner, but Ministerial control with Mr. Short as general manager; how would that suit the member?

Mr. TAYLOR had not the ear of the Government as some members had. The Queensland railways had been a success under the management of a man who had grown up with those railways, and

what could be done in Queensland could be done here. There was no burning desire on his part to import men for high positions in the State.

Mr. Heitmann: Johnnies were not wanted here.

Mr. TAYLOR: Mr. Short was not a Johnny, but was a shrewd, hard-headed gentleman, and no matter what portion of the running railways of the State were to be dealt with Mr. Short knew all about it and was capable of giving all the satisfaction required. It was unfair to deal with a man without a tangible reason. If any head of a department treated men in his department unfairly he (Mr. Taylor) would help that man to get justice, but he would not prevent the Government from putting the various departments of the State on a sound footing.

Division XLIII.—Colonial Secretary, £1,435:

Mr. BATH: It was time the Registrar under the Arbitration Act should make known his intentions in regard to the registration of associations whose rules embodied a clause providing for political action. Unions had been refused registration of amendments not dealing with political action, though the Government had previously acquiesced in the registration of the unions' rules embracing a rule embodying political action. If the Government persisted in their intention not to register a union providing for political action they should say that no union could be registered under the Act, and the people would know exactly where the Government stood on the question; but as things were now, the unions did not know what were the intentions of the Government on the subject. The Government had no right to dictate to the unions whether they should provide that rule or not. If a trades union was formed on the basis of political action and the members joining it knew that by doing so they gave their approval to that rule, they were the best judges as to the disposal of the money they contributed to the union; and it was not for the Gov-

ernment to say to them that even if the men were desirous of joining the organisation, they would step in and prevent them by refusing registration of the rules. The bulk of the unions were formed on the basis of political action. Men joined the organisations on the gold-fields, well knowing that they were committing themselves to the rule. If it were an attempt on the part of a union formed on an exclusively industrial basis to impose a rule later on for political action, if they attempted to say to the members who had joined on the one basis that they must subscribe to the other rule, one might understand the Government stepping in to protect the members. Questions had been repeatedly asked concerning the matter, but while the Government declared they were going to adhere to the position not to register these rules they continued to allow associations to remain under the old registration.

Mr. JOHNSON: Unions that were formed prior to the passage of the Arbitration Act, when that Act was passed had rules submitted to them by the Registrar of Friendly Societies as a model, and in applying to be registered under the Act they based their rules in accordance with the desire of the Registrar in order to insure registration. Now the Registrar sought to exclude portion of the rules to which he previously did not take exception. Explanation should be given, and the Attorney General was the best authority on this question.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL, though not taking to himself the compliment of being described as the best authority in the House on the subject, considered that he might assist the Committee on the present occasion in pointing out the difficulty that had arisen. It was definitely announced by the Colonial Secretary that the rule framed by a number of unions allowing a portion of their funds to be used for political purposes was contrary to the spirit of the Act and therefore should be expunged. Now the Leader of the Opposition complained that no action was taken in consequence of that

expression of opinion. [Mr. Bath: No action was taken in regard to unions already registered.] It was sought to have the matter decided by the court which would be the most proper tribunal to decide such questions, namely the Arbitration Court. It was sought to have it settled by the President of the Arbitration Court; but the President held that the matter could not be brought before him by the Registrar, and took a view as to procedure which practically blocked the question being brought before the Arbitration Court. It was in one way attempted, and at the time it appeared possible, to have a decision of the court, and it was intended on that decision being made, if it upheld the Colonial Secretary's view and if Parliament consented to it, to have an alteration made in the Act; or if the view had not been upheld and if Parliament dissented from the interpretation of the Act, to take such action as Parliament thought fit. However, owing to the action of the President, which he (the Attorney General) did not challenge, in saying that he had no jurisdiction to inquire into it, at any rate in the form suggested, the step could not be taken. A Bill would be brought in during the session dealing with the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, and that would clear the matter up so far as the will of Parliament was concerned. He (the Attorney General) had never hesitated in saying that it was something that was never contemplated by any Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, that an organisation registered under it should be registered for anything but industrial purposes, and when the proper time came he would advance reasons for supporting that opinion.

Mr. TROY: The member for Murchison brought forward startling evidence in regard to the manner in which the immigration policy was being conducted, but he (Mr. Troy) desired to point out how the Government had been treating *bona fide* immigrants from the Eastern States. Some time ago a gentleman received assistance from the Government to bring his wife and eight children from

the Eastern States, and Mr. Abbott, the general secretary of the Locomotive Engine Drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association, gave his guarantee for the repayment of the £20 advanced. The gentleman assisted had done his best to pay back the money advanced and had paid back £9 10s., but owing to intermittent work could not maintain his payments; and last night the Government had put the bailiffs into Mr. Abbott's house to secure repayment of the balance of the £20. That was the way in which the Government assisted these immigrants. We should compare the action of the Government in this respect with the action in regard to the immigrants to serve Mr. Teesdale Smith, and we would see that it was not to the credit of the Government.

At 6.15, the Chairman left the Chair.
At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. TROY (continuing) : It was not difficult to guess the reasons why the Colonial Secretary had refused to register the unions. Evidently he intended to throw on the various organisations the onus of proving that they were entitled to registration, and by that means compel them to approach the Supreme Court and incur great expense. Happily, however, the unions found it unnecessary to spend their funds in this direction, and thereby saved a considerable amount. It would be well for the Attorney General to be honest with the House on this question. Everyone knew that the Government, in refusing to register the unions, did so with the object of, if possible, weakening them and their power from a political point of view. The Colonial Secretary was not responsible, for no one accused him of knowing anything about the Act, but he was merely carrying out the desires of the Government. One hoped the House would be given an opportunity of discussing the measure during the present session. Although the Attorney General might satisfy himself that the majority of the House agreed with him, it was quite certain that the majority of the people of the country did not agree with

the action that the hon. member had taken. It must also be remembered that the members of the House as at present constituted did not represent the majority of the electors.

Division LII.—Police :

Mr. SCADDAN : The Police vote in the schedule was larger than it was in the similar Bill introduced last session. Had this fact anything to do with the intention of the Colonial Secretary, as announced in the Press that morning, to supply additional detectives to the Kalgoorlie goldfields. It was surprising that the representatives of the Chamber of Mines, when paying a visit recently to Perth, had a private interview with the Colonial Secretary on various matters appertaining to their interests in Kalgoorlie. Nothing was published in the papers in connection with that interview, but the Colonial Secretary had gone to Kalgoorlie and had there announced through the Press what was going to be done. Why had that attitude been adopted, instead of the members of the Chamber waiting on the Colonial Secretary as a deputation in the ordinary way when the Press would have been present and the statements made there have been published ? Again, why did not the Minister tell the Press at the time of the interview exactly what had taken place and what he intended to do ? One would raise the strongest possible objection to increasing the detective staff at Kalgoorlie, so long as money could not be found for a proper inspection of mines staff in that particular belt. He was much more concerned in the welfare and the lives of men working on the mines than about dividends being received by a few shareholders and money grabbers in London. The Chamber of Mines only represented London shareholders, in other words the London Jew, and they had influenced the Government to spend money in increasing the detective staff in Kalgoorlie. He had been told by members of the police force in Kalgoorlie that in the past it had been impossible, no matter how the detective staff were increased, to get at the bottom of the gold stealing. The fact of the

matter was that they had employed men to try and capture the miners with gold in their possession on coming from underground. This they could not succeed in doing, because it was not the miners who were responsible for the continual stealing of gold; it was the men in the higher positions; and it would be well for the Government to take into consideration the advisableness of putting one or two detectives on to those who were now asking for additional police. He did not make any accusations against persons, but so long as the Government refused to give an increased inspectional staff to the Kalgoorlie belt he would protest against any farther expenditure on the detective staff in that centre. The attitude of the Colonial Secretary did not redound to the credit of the Government. It was evident that accusations had been made against certain persons at the deputation which waited on the Minister, and the public should know of them.

Mr. HEITMANN: Although the miner had been charged with stealing the gold, it was not he who had the opportunity of getting away with any portion of it: it was the man who was handling the gold in the concrete form who was responsible for the theft. If the right men were captured they would be found to be among those who were now asking for additional detectives. Last week the Premier took praise to himself and to his officers for economising in the Police Department to the extent of a few thousand pounds. There was not much credit attached to a saving of that kind, for in Perth many thousands of pounds in addition could be saved. In the city there was a Commissioner, and under him a Superintendent, two or three sub-inspectors, and altogether 75 officers for a force of 475 men. A Commission as to the working of the Police Department would be asked for by the Leader of the Opposition, and he hoped that it would be granted; for if so the result would be that many thousands of pounds a year would be saved. In Perth at the present time there were six mounted men and for them there were no fewer than 40 horses

and two non-commissioned officers. As a sample of the promptitude with which the Colonial Secretary's Department attended to correspondence he would cite the case of a letter which he despatched to the department in March last, with regard to the motion passed by the House last session for granting one Sunday holiday each month to members of the Police Force. The letter was written for the purpose of reminding the department that this motion had been carried, but it was not until June that he received a reply. [Mr. Johnson: You have nothing to growl about; you were lucky to get it then.] It had its effect and all he cared about was that the holiday was granted. The services of the Commissioner of Railways had been dispensed with. The same course should be followed with regard to the head of the Police Department.

Schedule B — General Loan Fund,
£197,790:

Mr. BATH moved an amendment—

That the total amount under Schedule B be reduced by £15,124, namely the amount of items "Roads and Bridges" and "Public Buildings."

The Treasurer had said this vote was for work authorised last session but not yet completed. There were no details, however, as to the amount which represented the uncompleted work or the new work to be done during this financial year. Even if the total amount represented incomplete work, he would repeat the protest he made last session against the allocation from General Loan Fund of money for the construction of public buildings and roads and bridges. When the Premier was referring to the burden constituted by our sinking fund, he compared favourably our provision for loan redemption with that made by other States. From one point of view this State compared favourably with them; but we had not been borrowing for so long a period as they, and if during the next ten years our indebtedness continued to increase as it increased in the past ten years, we should soon rival the other States not only in public debt but in the

proportion of revenue to sinking-fund contributions. If such items as these continued to appear under "General Loan Fund," not only would the sinking fund be a burden, but the interest also. The Treasurer had tacitly admitted that it was inexpedient to debit unproductive works to loan account. [*The Treasurer: No.*] Then that denial was one more evidence of the Treasurer's incapacity, for his predecessors admitted the fact, like everyone who had studied Australian finance; and the undesirableness of the practice was proved by its results in the Eastern States, which, learning wisdom from the past, were now redeeming their loans and adopting some methods that would bear investigation. For improper expenditure from loan the Australian system of finance had been repeatedly attacked in English financial journals.

Ruling as to Amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: Last year he had given a ruling on this point. In Committee of Supply, the amount of the total having been quoted, no amendment could be moved for its reduction. He had then ruled that—

"This Bill was equivalent to the Appropriation Bill, and *May* on this point said:—

"Latitude permissible in debate.—An amendment on going into Committee of Supply does not extend to the stages of the Appropriation Bill. Debate and amendment on these occasions must be relevant to the Bill, and must be confined to the conduct or action of those who receive or administer the grants specified in the Bill. Nor can amendment be moved to its clauses or to the schedule to effect a reduction of the amount or an alteration of the destination of a grant; nor are the enacting words of the Bill open to amendment.

"Members would see they could not make an alteration, as the Committee had already fixed the amount of supply. The time for dealing with these amounts was when the Estimates were before the Committee."

Mr. Scaddan: Could the words "Roads and Bridges" and "Public Buildings" be struck out as a protest?

The Chairman: No.

Discussion.

Mr. JOHNSON regretted that the total of the loan schedules had been passed by mistake. He protested against continuing the unsound policy initiated by the present Government of spending loan moneys on unproductive works. To justify this the Government and their supporters frequently said they were following the practice of their predecessors, alleging that the Labour Government did likewise with expenditure on the rabbit-proof fence. There was no analogy between that work and the construction out of loan of asylums, old men's depots, and art galleries. When the Labour Government took office an absolutely useless rabbit-proof fence, costing some £90,000, had been erected through the bungling of the James Government. To preserve a valuable asset, the agricultural areas in the Great Southern and other districts, the Labour Government were obliged to utilise loan funds. The James Government held that it left a surplus to its successors. True, on the 30th June there was a paper surplus of £83,000, but on the 10th August, when the Labour Government took office, there was no surplus, and the expenditure from loan was justified. But for the fence the rabbits would now be in the agricultural areas, and the loan expenditure had produced hundreds of thousands of pounds. Yet this fact was used to justify the building of lunatic asylums out of loan. When the James Government had a surplus of £231,000 some influential people asked for the construction of an art gallery in Perth, but were refused. The Labour Government also refused a similar request; yet now, when our revenue account was in a much worse position, the present Government proposed to build an art gallery out of loan, and some hon. members stated the work was actually in progress. That sort of finance could not continue without intensifying the existing distress. But for a misunderstanding the majority of the

Committee would probably have objected to the expenditure now in question.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): A night or two ago one member, speaking on the Address-in-Reply, had accused him of instancing the loan expenditure of the Daglish Government on the rabbit-proof fence as an excuse for now constructing roads and bridges out of loan. He objected as strongly as anyone to such a course; but in a period of financial stress the Labour Government had certainly been obliged to employ loan funds for temporary works. Then the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) had said that to preserve the agricultural areas the rabbit-proof fence had to be paid for out of loan. Those were almost his own words. [*Mr. Walker* : He did not express that view.] Those were almost the words the member used a moment ago. It was to be regretted the exigencies made it necessary for the Government to expend loan funds on works of this description, and if revenue had been available he would not have said that the lunatic asylum should be built out of loan. But we knew that by building this asylum we were saving administrative cost of about £2,000 a year. Because of the unfortunate condition of many people in this country who were kept in the Fremantle lunatic asylum, the Government felt justified in the circumstances in using loan funds for their relief, and the country would confirm the action of the Government in this connection. As to the Art Gallery, he [(the Minister)] was told that when the Prince of Wales laid the stone of that Art Gallery, the distinct undertaking was given that the work would be completed. [*Mr. Bath* : Not out of loan funds.] There was no understanding as to what money would be used for the building, but an undertaking was given to the Prince of Wales, who refused to lay the stone until an undertaking was given, that the work would be completed. A promise was given and the time had come when that promise should be honoured, and on that condition he (the Minister) agreed to have the work

done from loan funds rather than leave the promise unfulfilled. In connection with roads and bridges it would be observed in the Bill which was passed last session that these roads and bridges were constructed in agricultural areas. Last session Parliament passed Bills for agricultural railways, and it was contemplated passing more Bills for similar railways this session. Within the last few days he was in the company of a farmer in an outback district who had kept 12 horses for 3 months carting wheat, and last week he (the Minister) was at a place 25 miles from a railway where a man was endeavouring to gain a livelihood by growing wheat, and there were many men in the State growing wheat for a livelihood. The utmost difficulty was in getting produce to market at such a price as to be a profit, and give people a decent living. Agricultural railways were built out of loan funds, and to some extent the roads were feeders to the railways; without the roads the railways would not be of as great benefit to the State as they were with them. He did not offer this as an excuse for the building of these works out of loan funds generally, but in times of stringency, rather than keep these very necessary works from the people, the Government were entitled to infringe a principle.

Question (the amendment being out of order) put and passed.

Title, Preamble—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

DEBATE—ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth day.

Resumed from the previous day.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. Mitchell) : I desire to confine my remarks to the department over which I preside. As members know, I have attempted to do my duty during the recess, and I have endeavoured to see a great

deal of the State and have travelled with that desire. On every hand one finds evidences of prosperity, and farmers almost without exception are doing well just now. During my travels I saw various portions of the State, and when we remember that our rainfall ranges from between 50 inches to 9 inches, one readily understands that agriculture takes many forms, and I have found the people succeeding. I had the pleasure of visiting the South-West with the Treasurer recently, and we found a very hopeful state of affairs existing. We travelled through the country which the Government to some extent improved a few years ago, and the work done in that connection has given a very good result indeed. The country in that district is of course very suitable for dairying, and we were there with the idea of establishing and encouraging that industry to some extent. The hon. member for Mount Magnet (Mr. M. F. Troy) challenges the statement I have made with regard to the capability of that great South-West for dairying purposes. But I do not think the member knows what he is talking about or he would not have made that statement. At any rate we found plenty of evidence to justify me in saying that this district promises to become one of the greatest butter-producing districts in Australasia. We have not to go very far from Perth to find men who started in a very small way succeeding on the land, and in one district I came across a man who had been a jockey but who had now given up riding and has taken to cabbage growing. Some members doubt if the country will respond to the work of the men without money, but we find it is doing so and the most successful people probably we have are those who have taken up lands and are endeavouring to work them. It is said a great deal of the land along the railway frontages is still unused. That is a fact unfortunately, but it is not only the big holder who is at fault. The great culprit is the small holder. I do not blame the small holder because he cannot improve his lands for want of means, yet

we have endeavoured to do everything that can be expected of any Government to enable people to work on the land. We have done many things which have not met with the approval of every member, and I would just say in this connection that it is very pleasant for me to find that the work of the Agricultural Department has come in for so much attention. Members have said a great many things that were very nice, and they have said many things that might just as well have been left unsaid. But that is to be expected. Everyone in this world who does things is bound to come in for criticism, and I should be sorry indeed that the whole of my work met with the approval of all members of the House. I should not be doing my duty if I did not make someone squeak. It is almost as much pleasure to have some criticism that is not pleasant from members of the Opposition benches. I want to say that the department has been alive to its duties. We have endeavoured to do the best we possibly can for the people of the State, and for the development of the natural industries of the State. The officers of the department have been perfectly alive: I believe everyone is as enthusiastic in the discharge of his duties as I am. At any rate, I know this, the Under Secretary, who is acting as director just now, has been particularly hard-worked during the past 12 months, and the result of his work is making itself felt to-day. At any rate, I may say without fear of contradiction, there is a very hopeful feeling about as to the possibility of agricultural development. People who were doubtful 12 months months ago as to the possibility of doing much with our land, are some of our warmest supporters in the work which we have now in hand. We liberalised the Agricultural Bank Act last session, and the liberalised measure came into force on the 1st February last. Previous to the 1st February we had advanced £749,000. Just three-quarters of a million had gone into the work of developing the agricultural lands of this State prior to the 1st February last. Since that date

we have received 1,067 applications for £150,000, and we have approved of 800 loans amounting to £112,000. We are just at this moment paying away each month about £20,000 for work done. I think that £20,000 a month is doing a power of good ; at any rate it is bound to make for good in the near future when the result of this work now being done will be felt with the increased production which it will mean will be placed on our markets. The result of our operations for the year will mean a profit of something like £4,500. When it is remembered that we are trading with a very small margin and that our work is simply intended to be a work of assisting the people to develop their lands and not to make a profit, I think members will agree with me that the result is very satisfactory. Perhaps I can speak with some degree of authority in connection with the work done by this institution. I have seen the result of advances taken up by people from this bank all over the State, and especially in the dry districts of the State. Unfortunately in some of the districts the people who should support the institution, who should encourage others to borrow money that they can get at five per cent. and that they have not to pay back for 30 years, have been antagonistic. They have written against the institution and talked against it, and the result is that the districts that mostly need the money—and the district represented by the Treasurer is one of the districts—have not awakened to the fact that we have money to lend. They have not awakened to the fact that if they will use the money they will reach the prosperity to which their district entitles them. However, the work is going on and the institution is doing noble work. I notice that some of my friends who were not quite in accord with me when I moved for the liberalisation of the Act last year are now talking somewhat better. I like a man who talks something better, no matter in what connection, and if a more liberal measure, one that is more likely to make for good, can be produced it will have my support ; but I doubt if anything more liberal than this bank of ours is in exist-

ence in any part of the world. We find from it all the money necessary to start a man with energy, provided he has the right land and that he knows something about his business. The Leader of the Opposition, I think, said that we should go a bit farther, that we should provide for machinery and for things of that nature to enable a man to carry on after he has cleared his holding. That was all very fine, but I consider that we do quite enough, and I am quite certain that we could not do more than we are doing with safety, if the funds of this State are not to be lost in carrying on the work. A good deal has been said in regard to our State farms. I would like to say what I consider a State farm should be. It should be a working model, and it should be doing the work that the district in which the farm is situated is best suited for. That is to say, if we go to a wheat district, wheat should be grown on commercial lines; the farm should be made to pay as a wheat farm; and to do that, one would need to farm on commercial lines. There is a minimum that may be done at a profit. It is quite impossible to make money at wheat on a small area, but it is quite possible to make a considerable amount of money if the land is used to the best extent, that is, if the man does on his area what should be done by one man to make money out of it. It should be the duty of the State farm to provide a working model. Everything on the farm should be just what the smallest farmer in the district would have to do to make money. I hold that a farm of 640 acres is small enough for any man in our better wheat districts, and I think that if it is a State farm there should be 640 acres cleared, and there should be the necessary plant to work it, with a certain number of sheep and other things that go to make a mixed farm. When I took over these farms I found that they were not expected to pay, that they were not expected to be working models, and that they were not expected to show what should be done in the district, but that they were more or less for experimental purposes. I think that is entirely wrong. We are bound to do

experimental work; it should be done; but it is a small thing in connection with these farms. We should do, as I said just now, what the man adjoining would have to do if he wished to make his farm a success. It should be possible for a State farm, managed as it should be, to produce almost the maximum quantity of the product for which the district is suited, and that seems to me to be the work these farms should do. In every direction in regard to wheat growing, sheep raising, and the dairying that will be done in these dry districts, it should be so all that the area and the work of the few men who would be employed are capable of doing. If that is done, not only am I quite certain that our State farms will pay, but I am quite sure they will do in every regard the work they are intended to do; and instead of desiring to curtail the number of farms, in the future I am sure we will have many of them. They will be pushed out into the districts to do pioneering work, and they will be set up in our more settled districts in order that people may be encouraged to follow on lines which make for commercial farming. Of course there was a time when the farmer went along in a happy fashion. It was not necessary for him to face the market he now has; but the position is changed; he has to face the London market with almost all his produce and has to live on the rate London is prepared to pay him. It is the duty of the Government to prepare the farmers for what is before them, and we are prepared to do it to the best of our ability. It is said that we closed down the Chapman farm. Nothing of the sort has happened. All we did was to improve the method of management, to reduce the cost of management, and we are gradually bringing that State farm to the position we consider a State farm should occupy. I wish to say right here that the farm is in the wrong place, and that it had been a success when I took over the management of the department. I most surely would have advised it to be closed down; but it had not been a success and I am not inclined to let go there until we have attempted to make a suc-

cess of it. When we have made it pay, when I consider it has done the work I consider it should do, if I control the department I shall most certainly move on. There is no reason why it should not be done; there is every reason why it should. Some reference has been made to the method we adopted to sell some old horses from the Chapman farm. The thing is hardly worth bothering about, but I can assure the House that we got full value for the horses. They were useless, we did the right thing in selling them, and if we had to sell them again the same course would be adopted. At any rate so far as that farm is concerned we are doing better than we have ever done before, and at just about half the cost compared with when I took over the farm. [Mr. Bath: It is not the sale of the horses that is objected to, but the secrecy displayed.] There was no secrecy at all. The farm at Narrogin, as members know, is the place where we attempt to educate students. I am not in favour of the present system, but it was in force when I came to the control of the department, and the present system had to continue for some time because we had obligations to fulfil; but I think young men of this State, and I believe the young women of this State, should be provided with means to acquire an agricultural education necessary to fit them for the life most of the people in this State desire to follow; and I think we might do a great deal worse than provide the necessary education on these farms of ours. The Narrogin farm is well situated for that purpose. I think we should confine our teaching there to young men of the soil, and to young men who will without doubt be in a position to become farmers when their education is finished; but we cannot come to a permanent decision in this all at once. We have obligations to fulfil. We have eight young men there under conditions, and we have to keep them there for the present. However, the Narrogin farm is doing much better than it ever did before; the expenses are less, and we are doing a great deal more work. The farm there can be made not only to pay but it can also be made

an object lesson which can be copied with advantage by the people of the State. We have a farm at Nangeenan. It is in the process of making; it is a comparatively new place and we have to develop it before we can expect a result. I believe it will pay, and handsomely, in the near future, but we have to come to a state of affairs that will permit of money-making before we make it. Until we have the land cleared and fenced there is no chance of turning it into account. A good deal has been said about the miller and the price of wheat, and I think the Leader of the Opposition advocated a State mill in the centre of the agricultural districts. That is all right. I do not mind his advocating a State mill, and I think if it is in the right place and is let to a good man who will run it well it might do some good; however, I want to refer to the price wheat has brought during the past year. We have not done as well as people in the East for many reasons. The miller has been attacked, but as a matter of fact, I am sure that for the past four years the farmer has had full value from the miller. I do not say that he had full value this year, but I can say that he had more than the value last year and that the thing has not averaged too well for the owner of the mill. It has been rightly said that we should endeavour to prevent the continuation in the future of the state of affairs that has existed in the past year. I agree with the statement that the producer should not only get cash for his produce, but that he should also get the best possible price obtainable for it. With regard to the price of wheat during the past year, owing to the fact that it was known that there was a considerable amount for export this year the freight on wheat was reduced, and that was in some measure very helpful to the producer. Notwithstanding that, however, the producers were not able to get on the wharf at Fremantle a price equal to that which was obtained on the wharves at Adelaide and Melbourne. This state of affairs existed for the greater portion of the year, and the price for our farmers was at least 3d. less than that prevailing in the

Eastern States. That can be accounted for to some extent by reason of the freights. It goes without saying that the people in the East, who have many ships calling at their ports, are able to get much cheaper freights than here. One reason is that the vessels are able to get good back loading. We have had very few ships calling here in the past, owing to the fact that the quantities of wheat for shipment have been small, and there is not much inducement for them to come. However, this will be rectified in the near future, and I believe we will have some 700,000 or 800,000 bushels of wheat to ship this year. I have no doubt that some of the wheat buyers of the Eastern States will find their way here this year, and probably establish branches of their business in this State, and thus we shall obtain advantage of the market which has been exploited by them for the last few years. As a wheat producer I do not fear the future at all. It seems to me that the outlook is exceedingly bright this year, and that we shall get good prices and good crops. The present trouble is sure to right itself. We expected the trouble, knowing it was coming, for such a state of affairs always exists at the time when a country is trying to build up an export trade. Farmers were all more or less prepared for the existing state of affairs. One great good has arisen from the trouble, and that is that the farmers are going in for keeping stock in addition to wheat growing. This will enable them to live even if their wheat crops are not quite so satisfactory as they should be. The Government are determined to advance the dairying industry, and with that object a great deal of work has been done during the past six months. We have brought to the State a dairy expert in the person of Mr. Kinsella, who has had a very wide experience in Canada and New Zealand, and has been most successful in his work in both countries. He is here now and is at present engaged in having a look round the various districts. I am sure his work will be of the greatest possible value to the people who desire to engage in the dairying industry. The Government recognise that this industry

should be encouraged, remembering as they do that we are importing £1,000 worth of butter a day in addition to about £175,000 worth of tinned and preserved milk a year. We consider it our duty to endeavour to advance the dairying industry to the fullest possible extent. As you know we have decided to put up a few milking machines throughout the State, and to provide by that means an object lesson to the farmers who have not in the past had a chance of becoming experts in mechanical milking. [Mr. Scaddan: You are a terrible socialist.] I am glad that I am not the socialist that the hon. member is. In addition to these milking machines we are encouraging the erection of silos. Hon. members will remember that Victoria is prospering very greatly because of the dairying industry, and that during the last three years that State has exported about £40,000,000 worth of produce. Surely therefore the work of encouraging the industry is well worth undertaking. If dairying is placed on a good footing in this State it will absolutely revolutionise the agricultural industry. In addition to doing these things we have determined to import dairy cattle. There has been a lot of criticism levelled at us and our methods, but we have done exceedingly well. As you know I sent Mr. Gull to the Eastern States to buy cattle for us. This was not the member for Swan—although the latter went with his brother and, at his own expense, did work for us for which I am much obliged. [Mr. Angwin: His brother then was not a dummy, as reported?] Anyone who attempts to advance the interests of the State is liable to be attacked of course, but I do not think it is a fair thing. If some of the hon. members had gone to the Eastern States and had helped to buy cows, they would not have been doing any less for the country than by remaining over here. The member for Swan assisted in selecting these cows, many of which have arrived and have proved satisfactory. We are getting applications day by day for them, and we have received something over 500 already. When you remember that we import each year the produce of 40,000 cows you will see we shall have a tremendous strug-

gle before we can overtake our own consumption. [Mr. Troy: What did you pay Mr. Gull's brother?] These cows have come, and are coming week by week, and we are endeavouring to find people who are on the land and willing to make butter. Surely it would be a great thing to put a cow on every farm, no harm could be done, and so far as I can see great good would result from the adoption of such a course. The money for the purchase of the cow is secured, and the Government run no risk of losing on the venture. We hope that the result of the action of the department will be that we will save to this State the large sum of money which goes out every year to pay the butter bill of the people. Apart from the question of butter, it would be a great thing to provide the people of this State with a good and wholesome milk supply, instead of our having to import thousands of pounds' worth of preserved milk. It has been said that I have sold these cows to dairymen in Perth. The people who said that do not know what they are talking about, and only wanted to say something against the scheme. I would like to put a cow into every backyard in the State if I had the money to do so, for it would not do a bit of harm. The suggestion of an hon. member that I was filling up the dairymen's yards with these cows may after all do good service; for it would be a good thing to put a stop to the importation of the large quantity of preserved milk each year, and enable the local dairymen to provide the people with a good and wholesome supply of fresh milk. Probably I may turn my attention to that side of the question later on and see whether people near Perth desire to start the dairying business. To object to this scheme of the Government's is hardly socialistic, because the objection can only come from people who are now interested in the business. Some dealers of course are objecting to the importation of these cows by the Government, but if they are to be joined by the members on the Opposition side, I am afraid I shall have to become a socialist so that I may be in opposition to them. We

intend to keep this business going if we can, and so long as I am in control of the department and my political chief says I may go ahead, I will continue to follow the lines that I am at present adopting. I mean to do the thing which I think will be of advantage to the State. In addition to encouraging this dairying business I am also determined to encourage the production of lambs for export. I would like to tell hon. members that this business is a very much easier one than dairying. The latter, it is true, provides a weekly cheque, and that is a consideration. The lamb business is a grand one for a man who likes to sleep late; it is an easy business, and can be kept going without any trouble. At present much of the mutton we consume comes round Cape Leeuwin; that is not as it should be, and there is no reason why thousands of pounds should not be received from London every year for meat supplied from here, instead of our paying thousands of pounds for getting meat from the Eastern States. Lambs grow very rapidly, and the industry has extended in the Eastern States in a remarkable manner. In South Australia ten years ago they exported 16,000 lambs, last year the total had increased to 248,000. In Victoria ten years ago the export was 56,000, last year it was 638,000. The export from New Zealand during the past ten years has exactly doubled itself. In New South Wales the export in 1898 was 40,000 lambs, and last year it was 263,000. Queensland, like ourselves, are only just entering into the industry. In 1898 they exported 200 lambs, and last year they sent away 20,000. I am very hopeful of having 25,000 sheep sent away from this State in the year 1908. To do that it will be necessary to bring in sheep. The Agricultural Bank Act provides for loans of £100 for breeding stock. We are trying to use this money for the purchase of sheep, and in order that the numbers of sheep in the State may be increased and new flocks be brought in, we are endeavouring to prevent one farmer from transferring to another, so that it will be necessary for those de-

siring sheep to import them, and thus the numbers in the aggregate will be greatly increased. In addition to the work that is being done by the Agricultural Bank I am bringing in sheep, as I hope to receive applications for many thousands which will arrive here about December next. The people are now applying for them, and I hope that every farmer in the State who is desirous of entering into the industry, and has means to feed the sheep, will obtain a couple of hundred. We will be able to give liberal terms, so that the other work of development which farmers, who are all new men, have to undertake will not be stopped. We propose to sell the cows and sheep on terms extending over two years. We insist on obtaining a security, and charge five per cent. I claim that these cows and sheep will pay for themselves in that time. If we get the farmers to take them we will not only be doing a great thing for the State generally, but will also be assisting very greatly the farmers individually. The fruit business has increased manifestly, and this year we will have almost sufficient to feed ourselves. Last year we imported £10,000 worth of apples, but this year the importations will be very slight. It is our duty to protect fruit and other growers from the introduction of disease of any kind, and the Government are now taking steps to do that. We will protect the people who are producing, and it is especially necessary in connection with the apple business that every precaution should be taken. The apple industry is scattered over a very large area. We have 40,000 acres planted for fruit, but this is scattered over some 20,000,000 acres. Members will thus realise that owing to the enormous area of fruit-growing land in the State, as is shown by the figures I have just quoted, it is necessary that the Government should see that the people who are desirous of growing should be protected and the industry encouraged to the fullest possible extent. I should like to say something as to the export trade. As I have said, producers have now, in some degree at any rate, to face London, and

to get there they must have proper facilities. I have in mind that we ought to provide the necessary facilities for export at Fremantle for a commencement. It seems to me that we have there an ideal spot, and that we ought to erect grain sheds to collect the wheat from the farmer, and if necessary make an advance against it until it is shipped and sold in London. We should erect there also fruit-grading sheds, and sheds in which we can hall-mark all the stuff we export. In addition it will be necessary to erect abattoirs and freezing works to treat the lambs exported, and it seems to me that abattoirs for the metropolitan area might for some time to come be provided at the same place. Facilities will be given for the export of lambs, and there is no reason why the freezing works, together with the sale yards and abattoirs attached, should not be used for the meat supply of the metropolitan area. At any rate, I have it in mind that the whole of the produce exported by our farmers will be shipped from that one point; and I think it will be possible for us to ensure to the producer the highest possible price for his goods; and it ought to be possible to ensure that the work shall be done so thoroughly that our exports will go away in perfect order. Much has been said regarding the proposed freezing works at Wyndham. I do not think the position is at all understood. Some members have said the proposal amounts to subsidising some "fat" people who own stations in the North. All I can say is, whilst it may benefit people who own such stations, I do not think we ought to mind if it does. [*Labour Member*: The meat ring.] Those who are called the fat people of the North are just as much entitled to protection as any other people. We have offered to make an advance of £35,000 to anyone who will erect freezing-works there under proper conditions; and if the hon. member likes to take advantage of the offer we will listen to him. All we ask is that the freezing-works and canning-works be erected. We offer to lend on the security of the whole works a sum

not exceeding £35,000. We think the loan ought to be free of interest for the first three years, and that for seventeen years afterwards we ought to collect interest and sinking fund to wipe out the amount. The conditions we make are these: The people who erect the works will have to agree to a *pro rata* kill. That is to say, if in the early part of the season one man wishes to ship 2,000 beasts and another man to ship 3,000, the owner of the 2,000 will arrange his kill on a *pro rata* basis with the man who has 3,000 to kill. The people who erect the works will have to agree to kill, freeze, and ship meat to London at a certain price. In Queensland that price is from $1\frac{1}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$, and our price will be in accordance with the Queensland price, plus, of course, the extra cost resulting from the position of the works. It is not so easy to make conditions for the control of the canning portion of the business, but I think that can be done. In Queensland it is said that so much per hundred pounds is paid for the meat used, and it may be possible to arrange for the meat to be treated at a price. At all events if the works are erected, they will be subject to conditions that will protect every producer and every cattle-grower in that country. This brings me to a point in respect of the cattle people of the North. It is said that they are capitalists. Well, as producers they cannot be monopolists, because there are many millions of acres still open in that country. But what does happen is, the boats which bring cattle from the North are controlled by a very few people. The small man in the North to-day has no chance unless he goes to the owners of the large stations, who can afford to hire the boats and bring their cattle down. Are we to leave him in that position for all time? I think members opposite will say he ought to be free, and I believe the only method of freeing him is by erecting these works. We are willing to listen to anyone who will undertake to do the work we require. We shall find the money up to £35,000, but will insist on conditions which, as I said, will make the works available to everyone there. But apart from that, in the

northern country we can produce, not the 20,000 fat beasts per annum for which there is a market here in the South, but, I think, 200,000 beasts for export. Now is this country to be denied the right to produce these cattle? Are we to limit our pastoralists to the outlet they have here in the South, where the market will absorb only some 20,000 beasts? Are we to let our grass go to waste? I think not. I think we ought to turn it to the best possible account; and it seems to me that if our people can export anything up to half a-million sterling in beef, they ought to be encouraged to do so. It seems to me that an industry which would bring year by year a large sum of money to this State is just the industry we ought to encourage. Without freezing-works Wyndham cannot advance. The production of cattle cannot increase one iota, for there is no outlet. Then, too, it seems to me that the question has to be faced for another reason. East Kimberley is a tick-infested country, and I am not quite sure that we should not insist on having the cattle from that district killed there. It does not seem reasonable to suppose that live beasts brought from East Kimberley, covered as they are with tick, can arrive in our southern markets in the condition we are entitled to expect. There is nothing for it now but to bring the cattle alive from the North; and unless we erect freezing-works the cattle must come here alive, and the production must be limited to the number of cattle we in the South can consume. That is not right, and personally I shall endeavour to have these freezing-works erected. It is a good idea; we offer the terms to anyone who will build the works; we do not offer them to none but the large cattle-owners in the North. I shall be glad to receive applications from anyone who wishes to negotiate.

Mr. Scaddan: Is it true that you have promised to subsidise the erection of freezing-works at Carnarvon also?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have promised to consider the question, and if the proposal is satisfactory, to recommend it to my colleagues. In that

connection I may say I shall have pleasure, from what I can ascertain, in giving that work encouragement.

Mr. Scaddan: The member for the district made the announcement, and you never contradicted it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I shall be glad to assist in the erection of works there, because we realise that it is a great sheep-producing country, and we know that the money spent by the squatters there in boring for artesian water has altered the face of the country.

Mr. Scaddan: He states you are prepared to subsidise them pound for pound.

The HONORARY MINISTER: As I said, the member for the district did see me, and I told him I was prepared to consider the matter, and if the proposal was satisfactory, to recommend it to Cabinet; and that I am prepared to do. What is more, almost every day someone comes to me with a scheme; someone wants assistance to develop an industry; and I always listen attentively to these applicants, and inquire most thoroughly into the suggestions, no matter whence the application comes. We in the Agricultural Department realise it is our duty to listen to the people who want to do things.

Mr. Scaddan: Why did you not listen to the agriculturists at Katanning, when they wanted assistance to erect a mill?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is our duty to help the people who ought to be assisted. We are always wrong, in the opinion of our friends opposite (Labour side). When we do things we are wrong, and when we do not we are wrong. We can never please them, and for my part I have given up trying. Now let me refer once again to the milling question. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) suggested that we free certain farmers from the necessity of paying a high price for the products of their wheat, by erecting one State mill. Of course he was wrong in that, for such a mill would be so far from most of the producers that they would be unable to use it. True it is that many millers, some millers anyhow, collect from the farmer just the two

freights which the millers have never paid. In my own case I went to a miller and asked for a quote for 50 tons of bran. When bran was £4 2s. 6d., Fremantle, he said "£4 12s. 6d., Northam"; and for wheat at Fremantle 2s. 11d. when at Northam it was 2s. 8d. I protested, and said, "You ought not to collect these two freights." The reply was, "That is my opportunity. You had me last year, and now I am going to make you pay this." That was the only point made by the deputation which came to me from Wagin: that they were obliged to pay the two freights which the miller was not called upon to pay. They had to sell him their wheat at a low price, and take the produce at a much higher price than the men at Fremantle paid. That is of course unfortunate, but it seems to me we cannot erect a mill in every centre. The present milling capacity is more than sufficient for the requirements of the State, more than sufficient to grist all the wheat we produce to-day. Of course this is a vexed question; but members ought to realise that it is quite impossible to subsidise people who wish to erect mills at every agricultural centre in the State. There seems to be little more for me to say on the question of agricultural development; but I should like to remark before sitting down that the work of encouraging production is being attended to in the best possible manner by the officers of my department. We claim that we have done much with this object in the past, and we hope to have our organisation so perfected that in the very near future we shall be able to overtake the requirements of the country. We hope to be able to obviate the necessity for importing the two million pounds' worth of foodstuffs each year, that our export trade will grow rapidly, and that the position of affairs here will be much as it is in the East. We know that the prosperity which the Eastern States now enjoy results simply from the development of their agricultural resources. Realising that, we believe that the same results will follow here; and we are doing all we can to achieve that object.

Mr. J. A. S. STUART (Leonora) : With all the diffidence and modesty of the junior member of the Assembly, with the exception of the member for Geraldton, I desire to offer a few remarks on the subject of our discourse. I was not present to hear the Speech of His Excellency delivered; and I hope the time will arrive and that I shall be long enough in the House to be present at the opening of a session when a good deal of this may be eliminated. I look on the Address-in-Reply as something in the nature of a waste of time. If I were looking for a text as the subject of my discourse this evening, I would be reminded of a notice which we have seen posted in some towns where reclamation works are going on, "All kinds of rubbish may be deposited here." I look on this—I may be wrong—as an occasion when all subjects may be discussed, whether necessary or unnecessary. In His Excellency's Speech there are remarks to the effect that the February session was not held because many members were absent from the country. That is putting the cart before the horse. I think that members were absent because the February session was not held; and had the February session been called none would have been so unwise as to be absent. I regret that instead of having a deliverance from the Premier in the shape of a 100-ton gun with regard to the business of this session, we have had so many who seem to have a share in the Premiership going about with pea-rifles, each firing in his own direction. That is the most flattering comparison I can make. [Mr. Taylor : You do not call that a pea-rifle at Kalgoorlie, do you ?] Coming to another subject in the Speech of His Excellency, I note that His Majesty's representative speaks in terms of congratulation of the gold yield. I do not think there is much to congratulate the country on in regard to the mining industry of Western Australia at the present time, for the yield is decreasing; and it is disappointing that the Premier in his policy speech said that the policy of the Government in the future would be to be more sparing in the assistance to prospectors, and to have greater

discrimination. I think that greater discrimination is necessary ; but instead of a cheese-paring policy in this direction, something in the direction of liberality, greater liberality than in the past, is called for in order to place the mining industry on a proper footing. The paragraph relating to the Mines Department and referring to the labour conditions on leases—that they should be abrogated or practically abolished altogether—is one that will not meet with favour in the part of the country from which I hail. I think that not only the labour unions but the leaseholders' associations will oppose this proposed innovation. The most crying shame at the present time, especially around Kalgoorlie, is the great amount of land locked up and held by companies and not worked ; and I think that if these proposals to make the labour conditions more liberal than at present—if the labour conditions are abolished—it will practically be giving the fee simple to the people, and greater areas will be idle and the genuine worker and miners will be driven farther afield. This is a matter of very great moment to the whole of the goldfields, and I think the Minister for Mines would have shown a better fighting spirit had he delivered the speech in which he outlined this innovation on the goldfields rather than among the farmers at Newcastle. The Governor's Speech contains the flattering reference that each man on the goldfields produced £438 a year. This is a fruity item, and sounds well in statistics ; but I think this money is being won at too great a cost, and to counterbalance that item should be some mention in the Speech relating to the Mines Department outlining some assistance to the men earning that money. I know that this is one of the items brought most prominently before me, the cost in human lives at which this wealth is being earned. I think it would be a very praiseworthy action on the part of the Minister for Mines if he would outline some scheme such as is in existence in the other States for forming the nucleus of a worn-out miners' fund. Miners' complaint, owing to the increased depth of the mines, is becoming alarmingly prevalent. A man

who, in the natural course of things and under natural circumstances of work would live to 60 or 70 years of age, is practically a worn-out man when he should be in his prime. It is the experience of most goldfields members to be accosted in Perth by some whom they have known in Kalgoorlie or elsewhere on the fields a few years ago, then hale, hearty men, as good physical specimens as could be found anywhere, down here, old before their time, broken down and looking for admission to the Old Men's Home to end their days. It is not right, and I think while we may congratulate ourselves on the amount paid in dividends, on the amount of wealth produced, we are overlooking the fact that this is being produced at a too great cost in human lives. Under the conditions in which men are working on the fields, we are bringing into existence a short-lived race. Many goldfields members will bear me out that miners' complaint is more prevalent than medical authorities give credit for. In many instances this complaint is credited with being something else. I have listened with a great amount of pleasure to the speech of the Honorary Minister (Mr. Mitchell) in relation to agricultural development ; and I think he is the most candid on the Treasury bench so far. I can hold with a good deal he has said, but I cannot agree with him when he says there is evidence of prosperity on every hand. I see evidences of depression, and I think the results of the past few months will bear me out in that. I would like to point out to the Honorary Minister that his department is suffering from a want of Yankee-like cuteness in advertising. I will give him an example. Quite recently a man who had selected land worked on it till his capital was exhausted. He did not know that when he required stock he could get an advance from the Agricultural Bank, and instead of doing that he left his land and went back to the goldfields to work and obtain more money. Another man with a few hundred pounds to spend came to Perth to go on the land. He wandered about Perth for a few days ; no one seemed to care whether he went on to the land, or to the East or somewhere else. But the Midland Company seem

to have more up-to-date methods. They got hold of him, with the result that he is now on their land. These items should claim the attention of the Minister in charge of the department. I cannot say I am very enthusiastic about the Minister's proposal to export lambs. It seems that we shall be sending the lambs away and living on rabbits ourselves if this proposition is carried out. We should first try to supply the local market and so reduce the price of lamb. I believe the Honorary Minister is on the right track and going in the right direction when he talks about greater facilities for agricultural education. A few years ago it was believed that no education was necessary for agriculture; that all that was needed were mainly strength and stupidity. But we are now on the threshold of scientific farming. I hope every possible facility will be given those who desire to go on the land and be as up-to-date in their methods as the people in the other States are. My experience on the goldfields shows me that fully 25 per cent. of the people working in the mines would be far better employed on the land, if there were good management and good administration to get those people there. Although on this (Opposition) side of the House, I am justified in giving the Minister a pat on the back for the idea he has given of greater facilities for agricultural education. With regard to the freezing works loan of £35,000, until the hon. member spoke to-night I was under the impression that this was a sort of "Kathleen Mavourneen" loan, "It may be for years; it may be for ever." The only remark I have to make about it since the Minister has spoken giving us the date of the loan and some idea of the proposal is that I hope the safeguards mentioned may be instituted. From my experience of these safeguards as they are inserted when a concession is granted, or when the agreements are drawn up, they are all right but they are religiously ignored in practice. I may only mention in that connection, to prove the necessity for care in these matters, the fact that in all the timber concessions—at least in all the timber tramway concessions—which have

been granted these conditions have been overridden without exception. These companies when granted the concessions are tied down to carry for small contractors according to regulations to be fixed by the Commissioner of Railways. But if the Commissioner stubbornly refuses to fix the rates it means that the holders of the concession may charge the small contractors what they like. I am afraid that if these safeguards with regard to the freezing proposals are not insisted upon something similar will occur. As to the Kurrawang Railway, a contractor cutting sandalwood is charged outrageous prices for haulage in strict defiance of the Commissioner's regulations; and one timber getter had to go out of the business, as he could not stand it any longer. I hope this will not be duplicated in the freezing proposals. I note with pleasure and a certain amount of enthusiasm a remark about the stock route from Kimberley to the Eastern Goldfields. That will open up an asset of the State to which most members here are somewhat indifferent and do not know a great deal about. I have travelled over a good deal of that country, and I say that until I did I knew nothing of the resources there awaiting development. Anything that is done to bring the producer of cattle and other stock in the North-West into closer communication with the consumers on the goldfields should have the hearty support of members of this House. Anyone travelling from anywhere north of Southern Cross or going towards the North-West must at times have been struck as to what is going to be the future of all the waste areas in that direction; and any measure towards opening up wells and improving the facilities for bringing stock down are well worthy the consideration of this House. There is a lot of cattle country in that direction, better for fattening perhaps than the country in the South-West. It may be heresy to say that; but the cotton-wood and salt-bush country up there is worth exploitation. I say I heartily support any proposition for bringing stock down to the goldfields. In the back country we are

suffering a great deal from want of communication. If the telephone system were installed to the northern towns, say from Kalgoorlie northwards, it would give a great amount of convenience and much business could be transacted that otherwise could not be done. When the telegraph is off, in the case of a breakdown, or sickness or an accident, we are practically isolated till the next day. I think the amount of money required to introduce the telephone system in these towns would be amply justified. I would like to say a few words in regard to the Railway Department. It becomes necessary because of the number of complaints one has to listen to at every turn; and though I am not in favour of the appointment of a Commissioner, I would certainly hail with satisfaction almost any proposition to do away with the present unsatisfactory state of affairs on the railways. It is not from one section alone that complaints arise: they come from commercial men and from practically anyone who has dealings with the railways. I believe that if an expert, not with the powers of a Commissioner, could be appointed under direct Ministerial control and responsible in the ordinary way to this House, very much good could be done. Some of the most absurd items that could be mentioned are continually cropping up, items which may seem small but which are continual pin-points of irritation. The charge for demurrage on the goldfields is double what it is on the coast. Is that a fair thing? I ask if the people in the back country, who have practically all the disadvantages of being at a distance from the capital and from all the softer and refining influences of civilisation, are to be penalised in this way with no redress? I could give a list from here to Fremantle of the small, petty annoyances that could be avoided. Another item which the Minister of Railways should take in hand is that the various branches of the service are not working hand in hand. I can give an example of that. An engine with a brake van attached leaves Leonora a few minutes before noon, but if I wish

to go from Leonora to Malcolm I cannot go by that train for the reason that the traffic and loco. departments do not agree. I have to drive or walk to Malcolm to catch the train there. That is a petty annoyance the inhabitants of that locality have to put up with simply because the two branches of the service do not work hand in hand. With regard to retrenchment, we have to regretfully agree that if the volume of business for the railways is shrinking, retrenchment is necessary, but we should see that this retrenchment is done fairly and squarely all round. If the outdoor staff is to be retrenched it naturally follows logically that the clerical and supervisory staff should be reduced also. Farther than that I do not think it is possible to go. There is, however, an idea abroad that these retrenchments are not being done with that object in view, and with the permission of the House I would like to read a sample of the retrenched railway man's letter. It is addressed to me dated the 10th July, and says:—

"I have just received notice that after the 23rd July my services are no longer required. No reason is assigned, whether it is a matter of punishment for some wrong I have committed or, as it appears to be a well founded rumour, that retrenchment is the cause. I have written to the Chief Mechanical Engineer per my immediate superior, asking his reasons for thus dispensing with my services. Considering that my period of employment amounts to 4 years and 10 months, I think, in fact I am quite sure, that if retrenchment is the reason for this move, there are a great number of younger hands in the service than myself; and if the pruning knife has to be applied, why not start at those whose term of service is the lowest? Seeing that I and a good few more who have received notice originated from the workshops, I think it would have been more just if we had been transferred back to the shops and younger hands dispensed with."

I think any man who has been five years in the service has reason to ask why his services are dispensed with. There is

another idea, that the retrenchment proposals may lead to the victimisation of employees who perhaps are undesirable to the heads of the service. I hope the Minister will keep his eye on anything like that. I dare say these men, as most would do, feel hurt at having their services dispensed with, but it is to be hoped that returning prosperity will enable the Railway Department to again employ those who are now retrenched. We have had a lot of criticism of the railway service in Western Australia. We had Senator Neild from the East who was most pathetic in his references; but as it happened, I was speaking to a business man in Western Australia who, after a residence of 12 years, went right through the Eastern States sampling their railway systems; and he assured me that there was nothing in the whole of the Commonwealth that could compete with the express service to Kalgoorlie. He was enthusiastic in that direction; and I think it is only fair when we are finding fault, that we should at least give a word of praise. With reference to the amendment of the Electoral Act outlined in the Governor's Speech, including so-called preferential voting, I certainly hope to see something in the shape of an amendment introduced; but from the information I can gather, this proposal for preferential voting is in a nebulous state and will lead to a great deal of confusion. It is a question that requires careful handling. I notice also that the amendment of the franchise of the Legislative Council is to be dealt with; but as there is possibly no chance of an election for some considerable time, there is perhaps opportunity to have a great deal to say on that subject before a new franchise will be called into operation. An amendment to the Arbitration Act is also outlined, and the only part in that to which I take exception is the proposal that bodies of workers who are not registered may state cases. I would ask the people who are proposing to do that to be guided by the experience of New South Wales where they have had something similar which has led to very costly litigation on all sides. I certainly hope that no proposi-

tion in that direction will be put forward. I have many faults to find with the Act and its administration, but any alteration in that direction would, I think, complicate matters and make the present confused state worse than it is. Another item mentioned in the Governor's Speech is an amendment to the liquor law, and this is a subject that many people are somewhat afraid to handle. I have heard various speeches from the different representatives of the Government in the country, and I notice that they are not harmonious or unanimous in their propositions. The idea I have in my mind is that it is necessary, considering the different climatic conditions and circumstances under which the people on the goldfields live, to have a different Act working there from that which would suit on the coast. Anyone understanding the circumstances under which the people live in both places will, I think, agree with me that in places like Perth where there is any amount of places of recreation, amusement and entertainment to go to, the Licensing Act should be more strictly enforced. As a matter of fact, there is a great amount of hypocrisy in regard to the administration of the Act at the present time, and I think it would be much better and redound more to the credit of the Government or whoever is in charge of this proposed amendment, to take the bull by the horns and say without any subterfuge or *sub rosa* business that Sunday trading should be allowed under certain conditions on the goldfields. [Mr. Angwin: You want to stop your miners from working on Sunday?] I am very deaf, and cannot hear interjections. I would ask the Government to take into consideration the different conditions under which men live in the back country. I do not wish to be misunderstood on the point at all. I cannot find one who will speak out on one side or the other. Personally I would not care whether there was not a new hotel license ever granted; but I know many men who knock off at midnight; and if a man comes off from the 1,900 feet level of the Great Boulder or the 1,400 level of the Sons of Gwalia mine, if he could get a drink on the way

home, the chances are that he would not get pneumonia, the chances are that he would benefit from a drink of that description. It is a crime to make men criminals because they cannot have a drink after hours. The same applies to Sundays. I do not wish to traduce the licensees in this State, but it is a well known fact, pretty well all over the State, that Sunday drinking goes on, and I think it would be far better if it could go on in a straightforward manner with no hypocrisy, so that a man could go in and have a drink without the fear of being caught and fined for drinking after hours. It might take a certain amount of courage for the Government to do it; but I think in justice to the people living in the circumstances I have described, it would be wise for them to do it. Another item which I think should be included in this amendment is in regard to the gallon license business. I know many people who have licenses to sell six bottles of beer who do not think it is any crime to sell one bottle, but the law comes down on them, and for the second offence they are liable to a very heavy fine and imprisonment. I do not think it is right to manufacture criminals like that. I think the Act in force in other States might very well be included in this Bill, so that it would be no crime to sell a single bottle of beer under proper restrictions any more than it is to sell six bottles. [Mr. Scaddan : Then they will ask for permission to drink it on the premises.] I have no farther interest in it than this, that I have seen worthy citizens made criminals by being fined for this offence. I fail to see the difference. If it is a crime to sell one bottle, why not for selling half a dozen ? I certainly hope something in this respect may be done. [Mr. Angwin : Wipe out the grocers' licenses altogether.] I now come to a question mentioned in the Speech with regard to the construction of public abattoirs at Kalgoorlie. I regret very much that the matter has been allowed to drift to the extent it has. It is getting to be something criminal, and there is someone likely to get hurt over it. In justice to certain people, how-

ever, I say I have been advocating the construction of these abattoirs for some considerable time. I fail to see why they have not been built long since. [The Minister for Mines : There was trouble about the site.] The trouble about the site was lamentable. With all that country about there, two departments got into trouble about the site. [The Minister for Mines : The fault was with the local people.] I believe a correct site was chosen, but I cannot understand the delay experienced in doing something in this direction. I have lived on the fields sufficiently long to know that almost criminal neglect has been exhibited in the inspection of meat. During the last six years I have been round those slaughter yards many times, and I am satisfied that many cases of sickness could be traced directly to the consumption of diseased meat.

The Minister for Works : Tenders for the abattoirs will be called this month.

Mr. STUART : I do not wish to reflect on the inspector of stock at all. He is a personal friend of mine, but if he were not that would make no difference. He has received much abuse, but I can assure the House that it would take six capable inspectors to see that no diseased meat is sent out for consumption. The various slaughter yards are spread over an area of seven or eight miles, and on one occasion I accompanied the inspector on a visit to some of these yards. We started at two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and we finished in the bush about seven miles from Kalgoorlie about nine o'clock at night. Is it a fair thing to ask a man, be he ever so competent, to carry out properly the duties of a meat inspector in such circumstances. It is a howling farce, but the Government are to be commended for having, even at this late hour, appointed an additional inspector. The health of the people on the fields practically demanded that something should be done in connection with the meat question, for if the workers throughout the State are entitled to anything it is to pure meat. The people who supply the butchers on the goldfields sell the cattle at a certain price, but they make no provision that the cattle shall

be fit for slaughter or suitable for eating when slaughtered. In these circumstances the butchers do not want to see a carcase condemned, for it is so much loss to them should such be done. This merely accentuates the necessity for thorough inspection of the meat. Another matter which I have been requested by the people interested to bring before this House is that of the anti-betting laws of the State. This is another question that most hon. members are chary about referring to. I am fully aware that it would be better for the State as a whole to abolish betting altogether, or that, if the speculative tendencies of the people require an avenue, we may do as other nations who perhaps are more advanced than we are, and introduce a State system for those who care to indulge in betting. At the present time the position is that certain privileged people in the State are allowed to indulge in betting, but others are threatened with all the penalties of the law should they be found breaking the Act. This is grossly unfair. If the Government put hypocrisy on one side and say that they will make an honest effort to stop all gambling and minimise the speculative proclivities of the people I will support them, but it is unfair for them to say that betting will be prohibited on the Kalgoorlie recreation ground but allowed at the Kalgoorlie racecourse. It is making fish of one and flesh of another. I hope the Government will see their way clear either to stop the evil altogether, or disallow the continuance of the differential treatment which is causing so much trouble on the fields at the present time. I would not like any remark of mine to be construed into the statement that I am in favour of betting or gambling. I am in favour of neither, and I would like to see the evil cleared out of the country. If, however, it is to be stopped let it be dealt with in a fair and proper manner. The sports which are indulged in on the Kalgoorlie recreation ground are likely to improve the breed of the men by encouraging athletic exercises, and it is much better to do that than allow the Kalgoorlie racing club to license bookmakers. I know that the latter body are more influential

than the recreation club, or the unregistered racing club; but some of the transactions in horse-racing that have taken place lately are not of a much higher standard than is obtainable at the unregistered meetings. It is lamentable to think that the Government have taken the stand of differentiating between the various sporting clubs. In fairness to those people who desire to know where they stand I would ask for some definite announcement as to the attitude which is going to be taken by the Government in regard to the matter. The people who are connected with the recreation ground do not want to put their heads into the net and, if betting at sports meetings is to be actually prohibited, they are willing to stop it, but they want all sporting bodies to be similarly treated. I believe in recreation for youths who are engaged in manual toil, and I thoroughly approve of the motto that a sound body means a sound mind, and it is well known that the former is obtainable by means of athletic exercise. If the Government will outline a scheme for State control so that the State will be able to make a profit out of betting instead of permitting the bookmakers to wear diamonds and their victims to live in huts, I will go as far as any other member. With regard to the tragedy in my electorate, to which attention was drawn the other night, I feel in a certain sense that it is difficult for me to say what I should in this matter. I refer to the Tower Hill tragedy. I certainly hope that nothing of the sort will ever be allowed to occur again. Those who know all the circumstances have spoken to me on the subject, and some of them went so far as to say that had they known the law would fail as it did they would possibly have introduced "Judge Lynch" in the district. It is a very serious matter that people who are living in the back country should be talking like that, and it shows that the stand they take is not without reason. There is many a man hoisted at the triangles, and others who are serving lengthy terms of imprisonment, who have less blood on their hands and guilt in their souls than Gerald Browne. It is lamentable that we should lose confidence

in the jury system and in the laws of the country because of the result of that trial. There are other cases which I could mention, which provide comparisons with the one in question. There is that of a kangaroo shooter, who was placed on trial three times, while the man who perhaps occupied a different position in society was allowed to go free without trial. Personally I would prefer to be the kangaroo shooter. With regard to boring for artesian water in the North-West, I hope that a consistent effort will be made on the part of the Government to undertake this work. The efforts in this direction made in the past have been spasmodic and ineffective. In the early days in Queensland the owners of the sheep stations had just as much enterprise as the Government here have now. They received no subsidy or assistance from the Government, but they put down many artesian bores on their own properties and were not deterred by the fact that they had to go down to a depth of 3,000 or 4,000 feet. Here in the past the Government at times have stopped work when they have gone down only a few hundred feet. Some of the officers of the Geological Department say it is no good boring for artesian water in certain places. [*The Minister for Mines: Where? On the Eastern goldfields?*] Yes, but in justice to the people living there I think they might give those districts a trial without taking the experts' advice as being final on the question. I was pleased to notice that during recess certain Ministers visited the country and endeavoured to find out the state of things as they actually exist there. I think this is a most advisable course for them to adopt. I was pleased to see that the Premier and other Ministers were up North, and that they were paying great attention to the outback centres. I will not refer to the gentleman who went to Japan, for I cannot find words of praise for him, but I am dealing with those members of the Ministry who travelled about in their own State. The only thing with regard to those visits to which exception can be taken is that certain promises made have not been fulfilled. It would be more honest for Ministers to

say "no" straight out than to leave an impression that they might agree to adopt a certain course suggested. [*The Minister for Mines: Be specific.*] In my electorate it was promised that a reply would be given with regard to certain matters within a month; that was in March last and referred to the warden's court and the mining registrar for Leonora. No reply has yet been received to those requests. At the present time the honorary magistrates in that district are placed at the great disadvantage of having to take practically all cases. On one occasion these magistrates went on strike. Such a state of affairs might be very serious indeed, where perhaps an innocent man was awaiting a hearing and was kept there pending the arrival of a magistrate. Even when one is procured perhaps it is a business man who has to be dragged away from his work in order to hear the action. Although this matter may be complicated by the fact that the neighbouring township, where there is a registrar, also has claims, there is no doubt that different treatment should be meted out to the district which I represent. It is not fair to ask these honorary magistrates to do the work that the wardens should do, or to call upon the police to do the work that should be done by the mining registrar. I do not know what argument can be used against the making of appointments to meet this difficulty, unless it be economy or vested interests. The question in my district is a burning one. I do not wish to appear as a parochialist and I would contend similarly for any other locality which laboured under such disadvantages. The policy of immigration has been outlined, and I think it is one that must meet with our disapproval. The best way to attract the proper sort of people here is to obtain good, sound legislation which will bring about such a state of affairs in the country as will almost compel people to come here. By that I mean that, when people are looking for a place to emigrate to, they will come here naturally owing to the excellence of the laws. The present superficial effort of trying to attract people is so much time and money wasted, for

we will get the wrong sort of people. What we want to do is to be able to advertise that we are the most advanced and up-to-date of the States in the direction of social and industrial laws. If such could be done people would come here in great numbers. With regard to the railways of this State, I think that the Government should consider favourably a railway going north from Leonora. The State Mining Engineer mentioned this in his report, and I think that his reference to it justifies my reading it to the House. It is as follows:—

"A railway from Mount Magnet terminating at Black Range would be dependent entirely on the latter district for its traffic, and it seems to me exceedingly doubtful if it would become a payable concern. The position would be immensely improved, however, if the line were continued to connect with the Eastern Railway, which would lead to a great increase in traffic between the Murchison Goldfields and the Eastern Goldfields. This connection would be very useful for transport of machinery from one field to the other, and for business in general. The passenger traffic would be sure to be considerable, as the convenience would be great for business men, investors, and men seeking employment on the mines. The line would besides open valuable mineral country all the way between Lawlers and Mount Malcolm, which might be relied on to contribute a fair amount of support."

I feel justified in making these remarks in view of the circumstances in which some of the mines there are worked. When I mention that the Northern Mines, previously the East Murchison United at Lawlers, were showing a profit on ore going 3dwts. 18 grains, less than 4dwts., members will agree that those mines are entitled to some consideration, and I trust they will have that consideration when the railway proposals are before the House. I should like to refer also to an injustice to temporary clerical employees on the goldfields. I think it is unfair to ask them to work there for 10s. a day. I understand this rate of remuneration is distinctly contrary to an Order-in-Coun-

cil made as the result of a recommendation by the Public Service Commissioner, dated May, 1906, reading as follows:—

"In a recent communication to the Premier the Public Service Commissioner (Mr. M. E. Jull) submitted a recommendation in the following terms:—'I put up herewith a recommendation that temporary clerical hands employed in divisions 2 and 3 under the Public Service Regulations, which divisions for all practical purposes embrace the goldfields and the tropics, should be paid at the rate of 12s. a day, instead of at the rate of 10s. as at present. The rate of 10s. prevails on the coast, and the Act itself says that the rate paid for temporary employment shall be based on that paid to the permanent officers, and as the permanent officers have an allowance varying from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent., it is well within the mark to fix the rate of pay for adult clerical hands in the divisions mentioned at 12s. per diem. It will really however make very little difference to the State, as there are very few employed. On the other hand it was very plain to me when I was on the fields that 10s. a day, which a few men are now receiving, is altogether insufficient; and as the Act stands we are not, I think, at liberty to pay them a lesser rate than 12s. if the rate fixed on the coast for similar work is 10s., having regard to the fact that the permanent officials are paid allowances. I trust therefore that this recommendation may commend itself.' The recommendation was approved by the Governor in Executive Council."

The recommendation of the Commissioner evidently did commend itself, as an Order-in-Council was made that such men should be paid 12s. per day; but so far, some of them at least cannot get it. The Commissioner says this is not a matter of great importance to the State, because not many of these men are employed; but that is no reason why, if there were only one, he should not get the rate of pay to which the Commissioner says he is entitled. I dare say it is somewhat ungracious to have to bring

up this matter, but this seems to me the only method of bringing it definitely under the notice of Ministers, who I trust will see that temporary clerical hands on the fields get what they are entitled to, without having to leave the service and sue for it in a court of law. I heard with great satisfaction the proposal in the Governor's Speech to accord due protection to infant life, and I think there is nothing that should commend itself more to us all. I hope the proposal will take definite form, and that something practical and beneficial may result, for infant mortality, especially on the fields, is much too high. A matter I should like to bring under the notice of the Minister in charge of the Coolgardie Water Scheme is the necessity for preventing any possible pollution of the supply. We have had on the fields several epidemics which I have reason to believe can be traced directly to some contamination, either in whole or in part, of that supply; and I would ask members to consider in the interests of the goldfields people what a calamity would result if the supply did really become seriously contaminated. Without waiting for such a calamity, some action should be taken so that any existing defects may be promptly remedied. I hardly understand whether in saying that I support the adoption of the Address, or that I do not, I am pledging myself to anything very extensive. As I said at the outset, I do not hold with much of the formality indulged in, and should certainly like to see it eliminated; but as I am not in a position to move that we should not adopt it, I suppose it will be adopted and we shall get to work later on. I must say I notice with regret that there is not either in the speeches of the various Ministers nor in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor any mention of social or industrial legislation. That is regrettable when we consider that throughout the civilised world every country that has got beyond the roads-and-bridges stage is placing legislation social and industrial on the front of its platform. Some Governments have had to do so because they were forced

into doing it, and I am surprised that even the present Government did not see their way to lift a few planks from the platform of members on this side, and include them in the policy speech or in the Speech of His Excellency. There has been some talk of a fusion of parties. Some members have said they see no difference between this side of the House and the other. I think there is a yawning chasm, into which anyone who tries to bridge it will fall. So long as the policy speech, and the Speech put into the mouth of His Excellency by his advisers, are so poor and so lacking in promises of up-to-date legislation, there must exist a very wide space between the Government and the Opposition. I trust that Ministers will say something definite regarding the betting prosecutions now in progress on the fields. It is hardly fair that the people affected, citizens of good repute, should not know whether such practices are or are not unlawful; and I hope that within a few days some deliverance on the subject will be made. If the Government cannot agree to take decisive action and altogether abolish betting, I think they ought to allow it to go on as in the past. A similar policy was pursued as to the Licensing Act. Sunday drinking was for a while absolutely prohibited; but apparently the Government were not prepared to face the odium which they would thus have brought upon themselves, and now the drinking is going on, and is likely to continue. I thank the House for the attention extended to me as a new member. I congratulate you, sir, on your presiding to-night. This is the first time I have had the pleasure of speaking before you, and I trust that our association will be harmonious, and that whatever is done during this session will tend to the prosperity of the State and its inhabitants.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory): Will you allow me, Mr. Speaker, with other members, to congratulate you on the success of your trip and on the health which you have recovered. I hope that

good health will long continue. In this debate the member for Claremont (Mr. Foulkes), dealing with the relations existing between the Commissioner of Railways and the Minister for Railways, said he desired some system more definite than that which now existed: in fact, he seemed to prefer Ministerial control of our railways rather than control by the Commissioner. Though there seems still to be a doubt in the minds of some, I do not think there can be any reasonable doubt regarding the relationship of the Minister to the Commissioner of Railways. The Act is clear and distinct. It gives certain well-defined powers to the Commissioner, and very distinct and well-defined powers to the Minister. The member for Claremont referred to many things: the high rate first charged on the Goomalling-Dowerin Railway, cases of special expenditure, and the Geraldton strike. In the Geraldton strike I admit there was a certain amount of interference, which, so far as the Railways Act was concerned, was unwarranted. But as to the other matters, the rates which are being charged, and all items of special expenditure, the Commissioner under the Railways Act has no power to spend money, nor has he power to make these rates, without first receiving the approval of the Minister. It is the duty of the Minister for the time being to take the responsibility for his action in such matters, and I am afraid that in many instances much odium was thrown on the Commissioner which might fairly have been borne by the Minister himself. There are two items of recent date: one, the reduction in timber freights, and another the reduction in grain freights. These reductions were entirely the work of the Government of the day. They were not approved by the Commissioner, who did not desire that the rebates should be made; and the Government alone were responsible for the action taken. And the same remark applies to other actions and other items of expenditure, and in many cases of special expenditure, that expenditure has been approved by the Minister, under the Act, before action could be

taken by the Commissioner himself. Recently there has been much criticism of railway administration, and some articles have been given to the Press by a Mr. Chinn. I do not know what are his qualifications; but whether his criticisms are good or bad, so long as we are satisfied that he has endeavoured to act fairly, and to publish what he thought was a just and true statement of the case, then, even if he is wrong, we should as far as possible appreciate these criticisms, for the simple reason that the more public criticism we have of any department the better for the community and for the department itself. Publicity should never do any harm; and I feel sure that any criticism of the Railway Department should do some good. Mr. Chinn's criticisms have been replied to at length by the Acting Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Short. Mr. Short pointed out the very great difference that existed between railway administration in Western Australia and railway administration in Queensland, and I am quite satisfied that Western Australia would not put up with the inconveniences that the people of Queensland do. Travellers from the Eastern States time after time have stated that they look on the conveniences here as equal if not better than those in any of the other States, and I am certain our service from Perth to Kalgoorlie is quite as up-to-date, if not superior, at any rate quite equal to any other special service there is in any other State of Australia. What are the conditions as far as the men are concerned? Our salaried staff here averages £160 1s. as against £126 15s. in the Queensland service, and the average of the wages paid in Queensland is 6s. 8d. as against 7s. 8d. here. We only work our men, with few exceptions, eight hours a day; that is the standard time in Western Australia; but in a few instances where men are not continually worked, nine hours is asked. Generally we adopt the eight hours system. That does not apply in Queensland; nine and even ten hours being asked from employees there.

Mr. Collier : They work ten hours in Victoria.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : The Queensland conditions have been quoted and I only want to show how much better are the conditions here than in Queensland. *Mr. Short*, in that article of his, pointed out that the passenger fares in Western Australia, in almost every instance, are cheaper than those in Queensland; and so far as freights are concerned, although I do not place so much reliance on the question of freights, our freights on "Miscellaneous" and Classes 1, 2, and 3, and the other different classes, compare more than favourably with Queensland. On the other hand we have to discover what articles are placed under these various tables to be satisfied under which category the cheapest rates are charged. It cannot be shown, however, that our charges are more excessive than those of Queensland. When we take everything into consideration we can show, although our railways are not being worked nearly as economically as in Queensland, we have a far better and more efficient service. At the present time the question of an amendment of the Railways Act is looming before Parliament. Very shortly Parliament will be asked to deal with an amendment of our Act, which is consequent on the retirement of *Mr. George*. The Government have decided not to renew *Mr. George's* engagement. There is no doubt *Mr. George* did a large amount of good work; he had an earnest desire for the best interests of the State, and I think *Mr. George* did particularly good service during the time he was in office; but our desire is to have the head of that department a railway man, a man who has been connected with railways throughout the whole of his lifetime, and we desire therefore to obtain an expert in railway matters as the chief head of that department. When this question is discussed, the subject of whether we shall have Ministerial or Commissioner control will be brought up. I would be only wasting the time of the House now if I went into any details in connection with the various systems adopted in the Eastern States or

in other countries. That is a matter which I contend can well be left until we are dealing with an amendment of the Railways Act. Those who prefer Ministerial control before Commissioner control can argue the question then. I feel strongly on the subject, but it is not wise to go into the question at the present time. Some remarks have been made during the debate, and efforts have been made to bring pressure to bear in connection with certain retrenchments that are going on. I believe everyone agrees that there can be economies effected in connection with the railway administration; and when one starts dismissing servants, many of whom have probably been good employees, and devoted their energies well in the best interests of the State, it is very hard indeed to have to dismiss those employees. I am sure I am not one, more especially at this time, who would like to see men thrown on the world. At the same time there is that absolute necessity for economy in the railway administration, and I appeal to members on both sides for every sympathy while this retrenchment is being effected. It is no pleasure to the heads of departments or to myself to allow any of the officers of the department to be retrenched. Some little time ago a large number of the wages men were retrenched, and we have also to put the pruning knife amongst the staff. When the leading officers in conference said they could make economies and would recommend them to me, I would be failing in my duty not to allow those economies to be effected. I hope members will give every consideration to myself and the heads of departments when we are putting these economies into effect. The instructions given to the heads of the departments are that old servants are to be considered before new servants, that is the older servants, those who have been in the department longer, all things being equal, should have greater preference given to them, and preference must be given to married men over single men. The retrenchment will depend to a great extent on the efficiency of the employees. In the Railway Department there must not be any room for wasters. It is found there are persons in the service who, once

they receive a Government appointment, believe that as long as they behave themselves, for the rest of their lives, they are secure in that employment, and many of them are neglectful in that sense. I have to be guided by the reports given to me by the heads of departments, and I hope with the additional railways that are being constructed, if employment cannot be found for retrenched officers to-day, in a short time employment will be able to be found for them. I hope to receive every sympathy and support from members when carrying out such an unpleasant duty as I am carrying out at the present time. There is one matter to which some public attention has been drawn, more especially by the Leader of the Opposition, and that is in reference to the reduction of the grain rate. He stated the reduction was made only in the interests of the millers and the middlemen. I do not agree with his contention in this matter; I say these rebates were made entirely in the interests of the producer.

Mr. Johnson : Unfortunately he does not get it.

The MINISTER : I was just going to admit that when these regulations came out on the 28th January, not in February as the member for Katanning said, they probably may have been somewhat late. On the other hand the hon. member will remember a deputation which waited on me from the millers, in which they pointed out that they had bought their stocks—[*Mr. Johnson* : Hear, hear; at 2s. 9d. a bushel]—and they of course did not receive any rebate. They would receive no rebate on the flour they would afterwards send over the railways in connection with the wheat they had bought and brought to their mills. No profit would accrue to these mills : the profit accrued to the State. So far as I was concerned we were not working in the interests of the middlemen there; but I would point out what was our desire.

Mr. Johnson : You might explain that the point is that a section of the community did not buy until you made a reduction, and they bought at 2s. 6d. That is my grievance.

The MINISTER : I think the hon. member is wrong. I well remember that the deputation urged that the rate should have been made retrospective. Had I done that I would have played into the hands of the millers. I would have taken from the State but would not have given to the producers themselves one fraction of the value of the rebate, and it was to the producers I desired to give the value.

Mr. Johnson : The miller had already given 3d. more to the producers, and these people got the rebate.

The MINISTER : Had I given to the millers, I would have played into the hands of those persons whom the Leader of the Opposition said I was working for. Let me explain what we did. We made a second reduction in regard to grain freights. We reduced the general charges we were making, but we said farther, "With a view to encouraging competition in the various districts we will make rebates." That is, if a miller situated at Northam would buy wheat at Katanning, have that wheat carried by rail from Katanning to Northam and then despatched over the railway to Kalgoorlie as flour, the gristed product of the wheat, he should only be charged the long distance rate from Katanning to Kalgoorlie. Or, for instance, take a miller in Perth buying wheat in York. If he had it freighted to Perth, gristed in Perth and then sent as flour to Kalgoorlie, he would only pay the rate for grain for the whole distance, taking the whole mileage from York to Perth and from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The object of doing that was not, as would appear in the first instance, to give a concession to the millers, but to force the millers into the various districts; in other words to prevent a combination of millers; because we placed them all on an equal footing and did what we could to try to compel millers in the various districts to make arrangements to buy, not only in their own districts but to go into other districts, so that there would be genuine competition among them for the purchase of the grain. And presuming that failed and there was still combination among the

buyers, we still said to the producer, "If you will send grain to the seaboard we will give a rebate of 12½ per cent., so as to give you the best market it is possible to obtain." That is what we did. I admit it took some time to work it out, so that the freights did not come into force until the 28th January, but I notified in the Press about a fortnight before that we did intend to make some alterations in the grain freights. I did this so as to afford the public generally, if they chose to wait, an opportunity of knowing the fact that we did intend to make alterations. [Mr. Bath: But the trouble is that the farmer is living from hand to hand.] The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that £79,000 had been expended in improving the standard condition of the railway lines, and that succeeding Governments had continued this work out of loan funds. There is no justification for that remark. We are not spending loan moneys in any sense whatever for any work in connection with the standardisation of our railways. [Mr. Bath: I pointed it out on the Loan Estimates last year.] I want the hon. member to remember that we have not spent the same amount of money, because in the year he mentioned we spent £78,213 in resleeping and reballasting and other works in connection with the railways, while in the next year we only spent £39,016, a considerably less sum being spent in reballasting and resleeping in 1905-6 as compared with 1904-5. Of course, the profit was £28,000 in 1904-5 whereas in the following year it was £84,000, so that if we did not expend that money in resleeping and putting in heavy ballast, on the other hand we were returning to the State a larger sum of money. I regret I have not the figures for this year yet so that I could show the hon. member what moneys have been expended in works of this description for the past year, that they could be compared with the expenditure of previous years. We have a comprehensive programme for the construction of passenger coaches and freight cars. At the present moment there are ten corridor cars and 350 trucks in course of con-

struction at the Midland Junction workshops. I was exceedingly pleased with the return we received in connection with the construction of AJ brake-vans. It shows that these vans were constructed at a considerably less cost than they were constructed at when we called for tenders some time before. Recently we called for tenders for suburban coaches. Two tenders were received, one from the workshops and one from the Rocky Bay workshops. The tender received from the Rocky Bay workshops was £26,642, as against £28,000 from the workshops. These tenders we sent to the Tender Board, and we adopted the policy of accepting the lowest tender sent in.

Mr. Scaddan: What was the number?

The MINISTER: Ten.

Mr. Scaddan: You are getting 22 constructed.

The MINISTER: No; I am getting ten corridor cars constructed in the workshops.

Mr. Scaddan: Did you call tenders for 20? It makes all the difference.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There was another criticism in regard to consignments. It was stated that when goods were sent at owner's risk the Railway Department took no responsibility for the carriage of those goods, and that if they were lost or stolen the Railway Department would not be responsible. I repudiate that, for I think it would lead to a great amount of dishonesty and carelessness. Where we receive packages sent at owner's risk we take upon ourselves the responsibility of delivering them, and grant compensation where the goods are short-delivered. As to demurrage on the goldfields being twice as high as on the coast, as has been suggested by the last speaker, I may say there is no justification for such a statement. As far as my knowledge is concerned, there is only one system for charging demurrage throughout the State. If the small grievances he has mentioned are brought before me, I think I will be able to show that the criticisms of the hon. member were wrong. In connection with the Mines Department I propose speaking at some length as to what we propose to do, and I should also like incidentally

to mention something in reference to the battery system. In that, however, I shall be short and concise, as I understand it is the intention of some member to move a special motion dealing with the question. I hope that when this motion comes on it will be exhaustively debated. Our losses on batteries for this year amount to £424. The reason for this is that work has been exceedingly intermittent in many instances, batteries have been closed down for a considerable time during the past six months, we have not had regular supplies of stone, and in a few cases we have had large losses. One of the losses was caused through dishonesty and another from gross carelessness. I will not deal with the question of the appointment of Mr. Dunstan tonight, for this will be a subject, I hope, of a special debate. But there are certain matters such as assistance to mining generally which I will deal with. The member for Murchison in his speech suggested that prospectors should in some cases receive as much assistance from the Government as half the cost of the cartage of their stone to the battery. Instead of giving this large assistance, I think it would be better to initiate a system of light batteries. These would consist of small plants which would be sent from mine to mine and remain at a place for, say, 6 or 12 months so as to prove the value of the property. That will be the more effective way to provide assistance to the small leaseholders, and good work will be done by this means in those places where we cannot afford to erect mills at heavy cost. Two of these light plants are now being prepared, one for Mr. Margaret and another for London. I hope I will be able to do something for the small district to which reference is made by the member for Murchison. Even if we were to pay one-half the cartage of the stone to be sent to the mill, we would only be proving the value of the stone, and would be doing nothing of a definite nature for the good of the persons interested or of the State generally, unless we happened to prove at one of the shows would turn out to be a big mine. The better plan will be

to try to do something by the provision of light plants. During the year we have been giving a considerable amount of assistance in the way of providing water supplies, and I will quote the loan expenditure for the Mines Department of the last three years, as showing that we have been trying our best to assist the various mining districts. In 1904-5 the amount expended in development of mining was £45,000; in 1905-6 it was, in round figures, £60,000; and in 1906-7 it was £85,000. At Meekatharra we have given a very efficient water supply which was obtained from 99 miles distant, and is brought into the township. We are now reticulating the township, and are also extending the pipe line to certain mines. Mr. Holman took me to task in connection with the price we were charging for water. A particular instance to which reference was made was that of the price of the water charged to the Marmont mine. I would point out that this property has turned out of considerable value, and that they have already taken out £19,859 worth of gold.

Mr. Holman : They have spent nearly all that in machinery.

The MINISTER : A 10-head plant will not cost all that.

Mr. Holman : It is a 20-head plant.

The MINISTER : They have done well, but it is a good mine. It is not a question of charity in connection with that property. After spending some £9,000 in bringing the water supply into this small community, we had to spend more than an additional £1,000 in order to take the water to the Marmont mine. There is the possible discovery of water in the shaft with sinking, and if a supply is obtained by this means, it will mean we have only a 12 months' agreement, and may be forced to pull up our pipes. We are only charging 5s. 6d. a thousand gallons, and at Davyhurst and at Menzies the charge is higher than that.

Mr. Holman : The mine I speak of has to take 60,000 gallons a week.

The MINISTER : In some cases the mines are taking 30,000 gallons a day. If the mine in question undertakes to obtain something like that quantity, it

will be another matter. We have given them to understand that if another mine will also take the water, we shall make farther reductions. It is all a question of supply and demand, and I am justified in asking the price which is charged, especially when we know that the mine is a fairly high-grade one, and a valuable proposition. There is no reason why it should receive special consideration. Is it not wise that we should expect to receive interest and sinking fund on the outlay?

Mr. Holman : You get a full return in 12 months.

The MINISTER : Nothing of the sort. We spent over £1,000 to connect that mine ; and what about the £9,000 spent on the whole water scheme ? Surely we are justified in expecting some return in connection with the first expenditure, as well as that undertaken for the purpose of connecting the mine.

Mr. Hudson : We all know that you are a marvel.

The MINISTER : I know that when the hon. member was speaking there were no silly interjections such as he has now indulged in. At Phillips River we are spending this year £13,000 in water supplies for the Ravensthorpe district.

Mr. Hudson : What do you get from the smelters?

The MINISTER : What do you mean?

Mr. Hudson : Oh, it does not matter.

The MINISTER : The amount of money which is being spent in that district shows that we are doing our best to try and make provision for the people. We are also trying to provide water at Norseman, and at places in the vicinity, through a dam which has been sunk there and other work done at a cost of about £12,000. The hon. member for Leonora will do me justice and say that we are doing good work in his district. I could not expect any such acknowledgment from the member for Dundas. We are doing rapid work in the Leonora district, and hope, early in October, to have water in Leonora, and to be able to hand over a first-class scheme of good fresh water to a board. I hope that this scheme

will be equally as successful as the one at Day Dawn. At Jourdie Hills and many other centres, dams have been sunk to assist the industry, and I think that with these sources of supply much can be done. Then there is the question of the stock route. Some members say this is being opened simply in the interests of monopolists.

Mr. Scaddan : Who says that ?

The MINISTER : It was said in this debate.

Mr. Taylor : We were talking of the freezing-works.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : The statement was made, though it is of little consequence. But, in mentioning the stock route, I should like to advise members that to-morrow the Government will give a reception to Mr. Canning, who has made the trip to map out that route ; and we shall be pleased if all members can be present. Mr. Canning has done wonderfully good work on that trip, and I regret exceedingly the disaster that fell on his party through the death of Mr. Tobin, who was speared by a black—a most regrettable incident in what would otherwise have been a most successful undertaking. A magnificent country has been discovered, but to-morrow afternoon, at 3 o'clock, Mr. Canning himself will be able to tell members all about his journey. The question of exemptions has been mentioned in this debate, and it is said that long and undue exemptions have been granted on some properties. I wish to correct some misapprehensions. First, there is no doubt that great consideration has been shown to the British Exploration Company, trading on the Pilbarra Goldfields, and in respect of the Gauntlet, the Bow Bells, and the Nullagine Reward properties, more especially in respect of the properties at Nullagine. For over three years the latter properties have not been worked ; they are very low-grade, and without railway communication it is absolutely impossible to work them. But now that the period of exemption is about to end, I intend to insist upon a certain number of men being employed, not at what may be termed mining work,

out at exploratory work, that is, for testing the values of the conglomerates ; and on that condition alone will the company be allowed to retain their properties. But in one or two other places exemptions have been granted for some considerable time. The member for the district in question said that the Lalla Rookh mine has been under exemption for some years. Now the total exemption granted on the Lalla Rookh mine was seven months and 24 days.

Mr. Underwood : It was shepherded for two years and five months.

The **MINISTER** : I am not saying how long it has been shepherded, as I know nothing of it ; but I am stating the actual facts, which could have been obtained by the hon. member had he wished. He also mentioned the Ard Patrick which never had exemption ; but it had been exempted for six months and 14 days.

Mr. Hudson : How long have the Norseman Mining Company had exemption ? Three years and four days.

The **MINISTER** : The member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) told us the Lalla Rookh had two years' exemption.

Mr. Hudson : What about the Norseman Gold Mining Company ?

The **MINISTER** : I am not in a guessing competition to-night ; but I wish to mention that in respect of the Bow Bells and the Gauntlet, longer exemptions have been granted—I think 14 months in one case and 18 months in the other.

Mr. Underwood : How long has the Ard Patrick been worked ?

The **MINISTER FOR MINES** : The hon. member can see the whole of the figures in these papers. In his speech he boasted of how quickly he would throw up a lease rather than ask for exemption ; and he drew attention to the Lalla Rookh property, owned by the British Exploration Company. I did show some consideration to the company ; and not only was that consideration shown by me, but by my predecessor, Mr. Hastie, who recognised how impossible it was for the company to work those propositions under the existing conditions. Mr. Johnson also, when Minister for Mines, recognised the same

impossibility. The facts regarding those conglomerate deposits are that the company spent some £28,000 to £30,000 on the properties, and the grade had got down so low that though the average result was between 8dwts. and 10dwts. yet, without railway facilities, without facilities for working cheaply, the properties were useless. No proposition had been made during that period by anyone who would have worked the properties. If anyone had shown me that he could have worked them, I should have considered his request for forfeiture ; but no request was made, no objection raised, and I am glad to say that those who followed me adopted my policy and continued the exemption. But in the future, as I pointed out, we shall insist on a certain amount of work being done. There are other leases to which consideration has been given. Long exemption has been given to a lease on which a battery is situated, at Marble Bar ; and I shall continue that exemption for the simple reason that it is the only battery in the district. The battery belongs to the lessees, who have entered into an agreement with me to crush for the public in that place. If I terminated the exemption and they sold the plant and it was shifted, there would not be a single crushing plant for the treatment of ore at Marble Bar. The same remarks apply to Warrawoona ; and knowing the difficulties with which the district has contended, not one single mine there having been able to prove its workings successfully, and the lessees having spent large sums of money, I think we are wise in showing them some consideration pending a decision as to the railway. I hope the question of railway communication will shortly be settled in this House ; and as soon as it has been settled I can assure the member for the district that he will have no ground for farther complaint. As to the appointment of inspectors of mines, the member for Boulder (Mr. Collier), even after the explanation I gave to the Press, said that I delayed the approval of the regulations so as to enable me, without complying with the Act, to make these ap-

pointments. Now, I can assure members there was nothing farther from my mind, and the hon. member's statement is far indeed from the actual facts. I should like to ask members, more especially the member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan), whom I know I can fairly ask, was it not necessary for us to appoint some new inspectors? [*Mr. Scaddan*: Yes.] Was not the retirement of some inspectors absolutely essential in the interests of the men working below? I think it is admitted that certain inspectors on that field had to be retired on account of age, and new appointments made. I assure members I did all I could to hurry on the classification of inspectors. The Public Service Commissioner had other work in hand at the time, and I did not wait for his classification. The applications for appointment did not go through the Commissioner. My department called for applications, dealt with them and accepted them.

Mr. Heitmann: Is it true that you asked a manager on the Eastern Gold-fields, Mr. Moss, to recommend a man?

The MINISTER: There is no truth whatever in that statement. What is more, I appointed certain gentlemen as a board to deal with their applications. I did not in any way deal with any application. The applications were received by the State Mining Engineer, and were referred directly to that board, which recommended to me two gentlemen. I do not think I had ever seen either of them before, nor did I know them; and when I received the recommendation I insisted that the State Mining Engineer should bring them to Perth, and make them pass a *viva voce* examination.

Mr. Bath: But the trouble is that none of the other candidates had a chance of passing an examination.

The MINISTER: The board dealt with the papers. I appointed a board consisting of the State Mining Engineer, the Director of the School of Mines, and Inspector of Mines Greenhard. The papers went to them, and I never saw them until the recommendation came to me. I insisted that farther examina-

tion should be made of these gentlemen to see if they had already passed the examinations required. One of the gentlemen had passed an examination and held a certificate from New South Wales as a mine manager, and the other held a certificate as a mine manager in England. They had passed every examination we could ask them to pass under the section of the Act.

Mr. Scaddan: What class of examination were they asked to pass?

The MINISTER: The examination for mine managers; more especially I asked them to prove that they had had 10 years' underground working experience.

Mr. Collier: Some of the men were not called up for examination, and they may have been equally capable.

The MINISTER: That is probable, but I had appointed the board to deal with this.

Mr. Scaddan: Is Mr. Cullingworth permanent inspector?

The MINISTER: He is on temporarily, and I want to keep him on while we get the work in order. I hope I can manage it to be able to get another inspector appointed. We have reconstituted the districts, and I hope to be able to get better work done than we have been getting. I hope it will not be long before we can make provision for another inspector.

Mr. Scaddan: I hope the board will allow applicants in future to be examined.

The MINISTER: I believe we have got two particularly good men. I intended to draw some attention to the question of the North-West, more especially to the difficulties that exist in the development of mining there owing to the shipping facilities. The matter that requires ventilation is poor shipping facilities which are going to miners on the northern fields; but the hour is late I will now deal with the proposed amendment of the Mining Act. A suggestion that has been made in the Governor's Speech has been before the country for the past 18 months.

Mr. Heitmann: There has never been an election on it.

The MINISTER: During the past 18 months I have never spoken in a gold-mining town without referring to this matter, and pointed out what I thought were the improvements which should be made by Parliament. I also pointed out that under the present Act the Governor had the power to alter the regulations if he so desired. We could cross out labour covenants to-morrow if we thought fit, and we could increase the number of covenants if we so desired. That is a principle which is wrong; it has been in force for years, but any Government recognising their responsibilities in the country would not dare to alter the covenants without the consent of Parliament, or to do it while Parliament is not sitting so as to give Parliament the chance of considering the regulations allowing them to stand.

Mr. Bath: Do you mean to say that we could make a regulation contrary to a specific section under the Act of 1903?

The MINISTER: What is the specific section?

Mr. Bath: About the labour covenants.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If a member will point out the section I will be pleased to deal with it. The labour covenants as we have them are simply the regulations which, as I pointed out, we could nullify entirely and increase them. At the present time the conditions in Western Australia are that for the first 12 months of a lease one man must be kept on a lease, and after that there must be one man on every six acres; which means that every man who takes up a 24-acre lease must provide four men to comply with the labour covenants. When I came to this State in 1893 the Act required that there should be one man to every three acres, which meant that if a man took up a 24-acre lease he had to employ eight men to comply with the labour covenants: that was rather harsh on a prospector. I know that I took up a lease on the Hannans Belt in 1894, and although for the first year I only had to work four men on the property, in the second year according to the

covenant I had to employ eight men. That is easy enough for a company, but it is hard for a prospector. The conditions prevailing in Victoria at the present time are that a condition is inserted in the lease, but the Minister may fix the labour in each case; where there is depth of sinking the Minister uses his discretion and he can give certain labour covenants or certain money must be expended: it depends on what the Minister may suggest when the application is made to him. He may demand labour covenants if he desires, or insist on the expenditure of a certain sum of money. In New South Wales the covenants are such as the Minister may determine. In Tasmania the Act now stands that on a gold-mining lease £10 per acre has to be expended, or work done on a lease may be considered, such as the erection of machinery, the construction of tramway roads, water races or any work which will facilitate mining operations. The expenditure of £10 per acre per annum complies with the conditions. In Queensland the present conditions are one man to three acres, formerly it was one man to every acre. But it will be admitted, if members will look back to the debates during the last year and the year before, it was stated that these regulations were never insisted on. In the two successive years—in the year before last and the far end of last year, a draft Bill was brought before the Queensland House. Last year a Bill was brought forward with a view of liberalising the labour covenants. When the Labour Ministry were in power with a Labour following, they brought down a Bill wherein provision was made for the expenditure of £20 per acre per annum to be able to carry a gold-mining lease. They asked that £60 per acre might be expended in three years, that of course is £20 per acre, but they allowed £5 per acre to hold a lease for the first two years. A lease could be held subject to £60 per acre being expended on the mining proposition within three years. Their provisions were exactly the same as in the Tasmanian Act. They would allow money expended on any work to facilitate mining

operations such as the construction of tramways, erection of machinery, building of dams and water supplies and all these matters, to count. That Bill was not passed but was withdrawn owing to the opposition of certain Labour members in the House. I want to say that the Government of the day, with the recommendations of the department, brought forward that Bill for the purpose of giving a greater incentive to mining and induce more development in the State. These are the conditions applying to the various States. I think it will be admitted that the position of the mining industry here is one requiring very serious consideration. I did not take much notice of the slight decline in the gold yield. That is a matter that will come and go, and I shall not be at all surprised to again see our gold yield increase and our having a bigger output than we are having at the present day. But the trouble is we are not getting more big producing mines, those mines which are not only producing so much gold, but which in the production of that gold are finding employment for such a large number of our people. These new mines are not coming forward, and the old mines are being worked out. We need not be afraid so far as our generation is concerned that these mines will work out. We have the history of Ballarat and Bendigo. Thirty or forty years ago they thought the end of their mining industry was in sight, but to-day their mines are working, and in many instances profitably. [*Mr. Holman* : But they are not working their mines here now.] The conditions of holding mining propositions in Victoria are easier than they are here, so that the interjection has no bearing on the question. [*Mr. Holman* : You have areas here big enough for cattle stations.] That is a matter of opinion. The tin mines in Cornwall have been worked from time immemorial, and I hope the time will not be far distant when our tin and copper mines will get down and be found equal to anything in copper or tin in the whole world. For a long time the men employed in the mining industry have numbered between 19,000

and 20,000, but with the enormous area that we have there should be room for a couple of hundred thousand workmen. I am not satisfied with the progress we are making and I think we should make greater progress. I want to resent a statement which has been continually circulated. The idea seems to prevail in the minds of many members that it is my desire to give away the fee simple. I wish members to remember when the 1904 Act was put through Parliament how we dealt with land which had been sold prior to 1898. Prior to that year all titles were made out giving away the baser metals, but in 1904 we passed a measure which gave the Mines Department power to take away from those people that which they had bought. The good of the State must prevail, and when we recognise that these people hold lands which in the opinion of the department should be worked for the good of the State, they should be allowed to be worked. I think having done that no person should ever accuse me of trying to give away the fee simple of a mining proposition. I have no desire nor do I think any person in Australia who knows anything about mining in Australia would think it would be wise to do that; but I certainly think we should do something more, not only to encourage capital but to encourage our own people and to encourage the prospector. I pointed out a little while ago that when I came here, to hold a mining proposition after the first year one would need to employ eight men to hold the lease. What was the result of that? The man who held the proposition had to sell as speedily as he could, because if he were not or gold he would need to employ eight men.

Mr. Troy : That is not the position to-day.

The MINISTER: But if the argument is that it is wise to employ four men on a proposition, why not make it eight, why not make it 12 or why not make it 200 men?

Mr. Troy : That is no argument.

The MINISTER: Then I say where are we going to limit it? What argument can be brought forward which would say that it would be wise and

equitable to insist that a certain number of men should be employed in connection with mining propositions?

Mr. Scaddan: It should apply the same way as if you take up a certain amount of agricultural land.

The MINISTER: Yes; you do what you think is a fair and equitable thing. The condition of one man to one acre was the rule in Queensland, but they would not enforce it, according to the debates which I have read carefully. At the present time it is one man to three acres in Queensland, and the Government of the day thought it was not a wise condition. I say that condition is not one which will assist the prospector. In the first instance we wish to assist the prospector, and in the second instance we wish to assist the small company. Say a local company is formed: the very people we desire to assist we prevent from going into the industry, on account of its restrictive nature. Does that argument apply to the capitalist?

Mr. Holman: He is the only one asking for it.

The MINISTER: Does the infliction of these labour covenants affect the capitalist?

Mr. Holman: Yes.

The MINISTER: It has been stated by some members that if we do not have these labour conditions, in the event of an industrial dispute we place in the hands of the capitalist the power to close down his mine and thus force the workmen to give way to his demands. That is an argument that has been used, is it not?

Mr. Troy: Yes.

The MINISTER: I have a return of the principal gold-mining leases of the State, showing the number of men they are compelled to employ and the number of men they do employ. I will deal first with the Kalgoorlie belt to show members how absurd that contention is. The Associated Gold Mines under the labour covenants of the State are supposed to employ 13 men, but they are employing 477, so that they could turn off 464 men to-morrow in the event of an industrial dispute, and would still

be complying with the labour conditions, and these few men would be doing a certain amount of development work for them.

Mr. Bath: And they could turn out the thirteen also if there were no labour covenants.

The MINISTER: What would that mean to a big mining proposition?

Mr. Bath: What did it mean in Victoria when the Minister insisted on the labour covenants?

The MINISTER: If the Minister wished to do that, it showed that he had not been enforcing the labour covenants, and that he only did it for a certain purpose. Of course I do not know the circumstances of the case. The Associated Northern Mine is supposed to employ four men to fulfil the labour covenants, but it is employing 129, and the figures for other mines are:—Brown Hill Consols 8 as against 31 employed; Golden Horseshoe 17 as against 859 employed; Golden Ridge 20 as against 61 employed; Boulder Perseverance 4 as against 540 employed; Great Boulder 19 as against 600 employed; Hainault 4 as against 261 employed; Ivanhoe 13 as against 648 employed; and Kalgurli 4 as against 400 employed.

Mr. Holman: Go on to the Peak Hill, the Champion, and the Star of the East.

The MINISTER: The Peak Hill Mine should employ 69 but they are employing 100. The Bellevue should employ 42 but they are employing 155.

Mr. Bath: They are not employing them at present at the Bellevue.

The MINISTER: These returns are to the 31st March, the latest that would be in the hands of the department. The Fenian Mine should employ three to fulfil the labour conditions, but 16 are employed in that mine. I propose to leave these figures for members. My object is to show that the fact of having these labour covenants would not prevent the mines closing down and putting off a large number of their staff if a labour dispute did occur. On the other hand, the very fact that they are employing this large number of men shows that whether there were labour conditions or not there would still be a

demand for labour. It is their business to employ these men and it pays them to do so.

Mr. Holman : If there were no labour conditions, many properties would be locked up for years.

The MINISTER : We would not allow them to be locked up for years. The mining industry is the most speculative of all : why then should it be more restricted than any other ? There are conditions in timber leases, as to the taking up of land, and a man must show his *bona fides*. It would be a bad law which would allow the expenditure of a large sum of money, or a large amount of labour, on a mining proposition and then give power for the forfeiture of that property if for one single day the labour conditions were not carried out.

Mr. Holman : How many properties have you forfeited ?

The MINISTER : None.

Mr. Holman : The reason for this is that the boodler comes along.

The MINISTER : The hon. member is nothing if not offensive. Surely one can make a mistake in judgment without being accused of running with boodlers.

Mr. Holman : And you refused to forfeit, against the report of the warden.

The MINISTER : You are always offensive.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The hon. member must not cast reflections.

The MINISTER FOR MINES : I am not desirous of being offensive, and have not reflected upon the hon. member. We are dealing with a subject too big to bring in party prejudices. Members will admit, when I explain what I propose to do, that I am trying to be fair and conscientious with regard to the proposals to be submitted by the Government. As I was endeavouring to say when interrupted, the mining industry is more speculative than any, and the restrictions are greater. What we want is to try to induce the people of Western Australia to invest in mining propositions. We want to try and make the prospector realise that the conditions under which he takes up a property will be such that his tenure will be nearly as good, provided he puts a certain amount

of labour or capital on to the property, as if he held a conditional purchase, pastoral or homestead lease. We want to assure him that there will be security for, and protection afforded to, him if he does a certain amount of work there. I remember that I spent some eleven hours here on one occasion, on one clause of the old Act as to the rights of a man to obtain exemption. I would like to know whether any hon. member would move now to strike out that clause. Do members opposite believe in its entirety in the labour covenant ?

Mr. Bath : Most entirely ; that is the whole experience of Australia.

The MINISTER : Let me give you an example of a regulation that was framed by a previous Government. Regulation 40a, which was introduced on the 13th July, 1905, enabled a miner to take possession of an area not exceeding 300 acres, nor of greater length than six miles. The provisions set out that two or more dredging claims may be united, providing the maximum length does not exceed six miles. For the first six months after registration the holder is not required to employ any men or machinery upon this area. This period may be extended by the warden for another six months, or one year in all. From that date the holders shall employ continuously not less than three men for every 100 acres, or keep continuously employed thereon machinery to the value of not less than £1,000 for every 100 acres, unless exemption has been granted. It is also provided that the value of the machinery on any dredging claim shall not be less than £3,000 or in the case of a united claim £5,000. Exemptions may be granted by the warden without reference to the Minister.

Mr. Scaddan : That was for a dredging lease.

The MINISTER : It does not matter ; that does not affect the question.

Mr. Bath : We allowed the same for a gold lease for the first twelve months.

The MINISTER : That is news to me. Under these conditions all that was needed was that in order to secure the ground for twelve months there should be an expenditure of £1,000 for every

100 acres. Probably it is right that the lease should have been granted to them, although the area is somewhat large; but I saw nothing objectionable enough in it to cancel it. To a large extent I approve of such leases. As to the conditions, you will recognise that a principle which is good in regard to a dredging claim surely is good in regard to any other claim. I do not want to say much more, but only to emphasise this fact. Whenever mention has been made of the fact that capital is necessary there has been too much of a tendency on the part of members to make remarks such as those which have come from the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) to the effect that we are working in the interests of the hoodler or the Jew.

Mr. Bath: You said that in 1903.

The MINISTER: I never used the expression.

Mr. Bath: That is the very language you used.

The MINISTER: The hon. member is misquoting me to a very large extent. I was not the person who said that.

Mr. Bath: I quote you exactly.

The MINISTER: The question arises in connection with this industry as to whether capital is necessary. Is it wise for us to urge that capital should be brought into the country in order to assist in the development of the industry? So long as propositions were being discovered which went three or four ounces to the ton there was no necessity to urge the introduction of capital, and no difficulty in obtaining money; in fact under such circumstances it is very likely we could obtain money for ourselves. But dealing with low-grade propositions it is a very different matter, and it is recognised as essential that we must have capital for the purpose of working such mines. I think we should do all we can in the first instance to encourage our own men, and assist the prospector and the flotation of local companies. The member for Boulder (Mr. Collier) drew attention to the fact that out of £78,000,000 worth of gold which has been won in this country, £15,000,000 worth went out of the State in dividends. It is

unfortunate that so much money should go out of the State; but the hon. member did not point out that the whole or at least the greater portion of the 60 millions has been spent within the State. I have here a few figures. Take, for instance, the Sons of Gwalia mine. Its expenditure to date is £1,412,000; the expenditure for the last six months was £81,000; it is treating dirt to the value of 39s. 3d., and the treatment costs have been for the months of March and April 15s. 7d. and 15s. 6d. Could a prospector carry on such a proposition as the Sons of Gwalia at the present day? Could it be carried out so profitably if it were not for the employment of large capital? Take the Cosmopolitan mine. Members know how poor it was for a long time. I remember when Mr. Faulkner had that Diamantina lease and sold it to the big company. Had that ground remained in Mr. Faulkner's hands it would probably have been worked to the 200-foot level, and then abandoned. Elsewhere on the road to Tampa one may see magnificent reefs as true as one could wish a reef to run, with good values on the surface, and yet deserted; and the Cosmopolitan mine also would be deserted were it not held by a large company. The expenditure on the mine has exceeded £100,000. The treatment costs, according to the last return, are 14s. 6d. a ton, and the total cost, including London expenses, is 21s. 3d. The company spent thousands of pounds there; they have miles and miles of development work; and if it were not for the capital expended and for the machinery which enables them to work so cheaply, there would not be 1,500 or 1,600 people in Kookynie township, or so many men employed during the last eight or nine years. The same statement applies to the whole of the Kalgoorlie Belt, to Leonora, to Day Dawn, to Lawlers. At the last-mentioned place there is a mine which has been working for a long time on about 4-dwt. ore; and were it not for the money expended in machinery, such mines could not carry on. And I wish to emphasise the fact that I have not

heard from the people who are running these big mining propositions the slightest expression of a desire to cut down the current rate of wages. They have always held that they have the best miners they could get in any part of the world; that they could show better results with high-priced labour than in any other mining field. They are satisfied with the labour they have. I say it is our duty to encourage capital here, because we have so vast an area that if we wish to see our people employed capital must come here for developmental purposes. It was most pitiable, when going through the enormous areas in the North-West, to see how little was being done by way of development. It is futile for working miners to say they have done this and that. What is the use of a mine that is worked for twelve months, two years, or five years, and has 10 or 13oz. crushings, and we see nothing but a windlass or a whip on the mine; and the owner calls that mining for the good of the country! We want some enterprise to employ not only the miner but other people, so as to provide a good market for the pastoralist and the agriculturist, and to help to build up the country. That is why I ask for some investigation of the mining laws, and I desire to submit a motion to the House that a select committee be appointed to inquire and report to Parliament during this session, with a view to amending legislation; or, on the other hand, I suggest that I should bring in a Bill as speedily as possible, have it read a second time *pro forma*, and refer it to a select committee, which should collect all the evidence as publicly, as openly, and as quickly as may be, and let members decide which is the better course to pursue. That is all I ask for—a clear, honest, and impartial investigation of the question. My only object is to try to stimulate the mining industry. Let us get rid entirely of the notion that some of us are working for the “boodler,” or anything of that sort. Let us feel that we have only one desire: to try to improve the condition of the industry. When we are finding

employment for a hundred thousand men in Western Australia, surely the conditions should be better. There should be a better chance of men's finding employment, a better prospect of higher wages, than if we have only 18,000, 19,000, or 20,000 men employed. I farther ask that members should, when this question goes before them, give it fair and impartial consideration. Let us have a full inquiry to bring out something practical, which will prevent mining from going into the background, which will stimulate the industry, and make Western Australia once again the great gold-producer of the Australian States. I thank members for their kind hearing at this late hour. I hope we shall have in the near future a quiet discussion on this subject, and that arrangements may be made between the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) and me as to the procedure to adopt with a view to a thorough inquiry.

On motion by *Mr. Horan*, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.17 o'clock, until the next day.
