

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 15th October, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

BILL—PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT.
Report of Committee adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1918-19.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 1st October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Vote—His Excellency the Governor, £1,682: Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.43]: I have on several occasions during the past few weeks asked the Premier if he could inform the House when the annual reports of the various departments would be available to members. I regret that so far these reports, particularly those concerning the big spending departments of the State, have not yet been laid upon the Table of the House. The Auditor General's report also is not yet in our hands. I admit that it is not usual for that to be presented to Parliament at this stage in the year. If, however, the Government can facilitate the preparation of that report so that it may be in the hands of members before the discussion on the various departments is concluded, it will certainly be of considerable advantage to the Committee. With regard to the annual reports of the departments, there is the Railway Department, Mines Department, the Lands Department, the Agricultural Department, and the Water Supply Department, and all the big spending departments, not one of the reports of which has yet been presented to the House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have not had the Lands Department report since 1915.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am unable to understand why this is so. I do know that in past years the reports of these departments, certainly that of the Mines Department, have been presented to the House on the opening day of the session. When we have regard to the fact that this report is for the calendar year, and that we are now in October, nearing the end of another year, it savours somewhat of neglect to know that it is not yet available. If these reports are not presented to the House before we come to the consideration of, at any rate, the departmental estimates, the Government might just as well save money by not printing them, because they will be of practically no value. Members will admit that in the consideration of the departmental estimates the doings of the different departments as set out in their annual reports, is of great assistance, and I hope before we reach the departmental votes the

reports will be available. I wish, too, at this early stage to protest most emphatically against the altered form of the Estimates, the form in which they have been presented to the House. If members will turn up the Estimates and compare them with those of last year they will find that much valuable information has been entirely eliminated. There has been a considerable amount of condensation to the disadvantage generally of hon. members in the way of consideration of such important business as that of the Annual Estimates of the State for the year. The Treasurer justifies this on the score of economy, but I venture the opinion that it is false economy to curtail in any way the information which should be placed before hon. members. If we turn to the Estimates we find the first column is entirely omitted this year, that is, the column which conveys the information to members as to what the vote of the particular item or department was last year. The Estimates now commence with the column which showed the actual expenditure. It is of considerable advantage to members to also have that column showing what the vote is. It is essential that members should be able to see what the actual expenditure was on any item or on any vote last year, and also what the vote of the House was with regard to that particular item or department. Members should be in possession of the information as to whether the Government have exceeded the vote which was passed by Parliament in the preceding year, and it is important that this information should be available if we are to intelligently discuss the various items. After all, what is the use of discussing and voting certain amounts if the Government of the day exceed those amounts in the actual results, and the column which should convey the information as to whether the sum has been exceeded or even underdrawn is taken out from the Estimates? Then again, the column at the end of the page, which showed the decrease or increase on the individual items has also been struck out, and now we have only the information showing the total increase or decreases in the department or sub-department. That will be found to be inconvenient to members. Certainly by comparing the two columns, those showing the expenditure of last year and the vote of this year, members were able to see whether there was provision for an increase or a reduction. But in order to get that information now they must go through the necessary work of making their own calculations. The greatest complaint I have to make, however, is with regard to the alteration in the form of the Estimates, that is in the method of condensation. Where the items have formerly been set out in detail for members' information, this year we find that many of them are grouped together in the one vote. Where before we had individual items set out, so that members could see whether there was an increase provided in the salary of an individual officer or an increase in the vote, everything is now grouped, and hon. members are unable to see whether increases are made or reductions are effected. I can understand the officers of the depart-

ments supporting a policy of this kind, because it will enable the Government, if they are so minded, to grant increases of salaries in many directions without the knowledge of Parliament. The only way now for hon. members to find out will be by asking for detailed information upon every item. Last year, for instance, the Committee refused to agree to increases in certain salaries set down in the Estimates. In some directions the amounts were struck out. This year hon. members will not be in a position to know whether there are any increases provided for, because the votes are lumped together. I warn hon. members, particularly new members, that they will make a great mistake if they agree to let the Estimates pass in their altered form. This is the first step. Next year there will be a further condensation, and in the course of a year or two we may expect to have the Estimates presented to us in a form which will only indicate the total votes of the departments. We shall have then merely—Mines Department, £60,000; Lands Department, £46,000; Works Department, £110,000, and so on. That is the tendency of this condensation as we see it in the Estimates of this year. And in the interests of the Treasurer himself, any slight saving which will be made will be more than balanced by the fact that members will not be in a position to exercise a close and analytical examination of the details. That, I take it, is what the Government require. By closely examining the details of the Estimates, members are able to point out items of expenditure which in their opinion may be reduced. I take it that will be of advantage to the Government, but in the form in which the Estimates have been framed this year, nothing of that kind will be possible. I have no desire to take any extreme steps, much as I feel inclined to do.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think we should take a vote of the House on it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Estimates should certainly be withdrawn and reprinted, unless the Treasurer will give the assurance that next year they will be presented in the form in which we have been accustomed to receive them. Ever since we have had responsible government, and certainly ever since I have been in this House, information of this kind has never been denied us merely on the score of economy. The saving of a few pounds here or there is not worth the inconvenience which will be occasioned to members. Therefore, I hope the Treasurer will give us the assurance that next year we shall have the Estimates presented in their old form. If he cannot see his way to give that assurance, I shall feel tempted to take a vote of the Committee to see whether members' privileges are to be denied them, and whether the information they are entitled to have supplied to them is to be curtailed or cut out altogether, simply on the score of economy. I appreciate to the full the difficult task which the Treasurer has to face so far as the financial position of the State is concerned. That appreciation, however, cannot extend to my offering the hon. member any praise. But if I find myself unable to praise the efforts of the Treasurer and the Government, it will be simply because

the position of the State financially will not permit me to do so.

Mr. Teesdale: You always criticise.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that the hon. member is entitled to say that. If the hon. member had been here in past years he would be able to contrast the criticism that came from this side of the House during the time the Labour party were in office with the attitude of himself and his colleagues during the life of the present Parliament. The hon. member would then be astounded at our moderation. To him it may appear that we are unduly critical, but there has been no occasion for complaint so far as we are concerned during this Parliament, that is, comparing the attitude of the members of the Opposition in other days with that of the present Opposition. I am not disposed to speak at any length on the financial statement, because it is almost futile to attempt to do so. In the first place there is nothing new to say. We have to cover the same old ground which has been covered on innumerable occasions, and deal with facts and figures which are well known to all hon. members who take any interest in the financial position of the country. That being so, I feel that little good will be served by speaking at undue length. I regret, too, that very little interest seems to be taken in the House—and there is certainly very little outside—with regard to the financial position of the State. We seem to have reached that stage now when a considerable number of our people have come to accept the deficits year in and year out as the natural order of things, just as we have been rising in the morning for the past four years and reading of the war swaying backwards and forwards. So it has been month after month when the financial returns have been published; the general public have come to accept the position presented to them as inevitable.

Mr. Davies: Until the well runs dry.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But I cannot refrain from contrasting that indifference and shall I say acceptance, of the position to-day, with what it was during the time the Labour Government were in office. I have no wish whatever to go over the old ground, but when I recall the fact that in certain sections of the Press of this country and in the semi-public institutions, that section of the public who kept an eye on the Government of the day and their doings—when I contrast their silence to-day with regard to the financial position, with the chorus of complaints which came from them in years gone by and the keen and active criticism which was indulged in when the Labour Government were in office, I can only say that I am amazed at their complaisance at the present time.

Mr. Hardwick: You are not referring to the "West Australian"?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, not just now. When that paper does show some little independence, some tendency to criticise, members on the Government side make very strong complaints that the "West Australian" is unduly criticising the Government. I wonder what those members would have said if they had sat behind a Government subjected to the criticism which was levelled at the Labour

Government. If they are going to complain of the mild milk-and-water comments in the Press about the shortcomings of the present Government, what would they have said if they had had to undergo the shower of criticism which fell upon the Labour Government. I remember that we had, at least three times a week, morning, afternoon and on Sundays, held up to the scorn and ridicule of all the financial wisacres of this country the general maladministration and incompetent bungling in finance on the part of the Labour Government. So strong did it get and so regular were the attacks that I grew to dread the first of the month.

The Colonial Treasurer: I have the same dread now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When on the first of the month I rose and opened the newspaper, a perusal of the comments always spoilt my cup of coffee; because we had the one column in which were revealed the results of the months' operations, and there was always to be found on another page the inevitable leading article in condemnation of the administration of the Government. But to-day, apparently, some of those newspapers have no concern whatever in the finances. I have noticed that not once during the past nine months of this year has any reference been made by certain newspapers to the financial position of the State.

Mr. Teesdale: Words fail them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That can hardly be so, because whilst the finances of this State have entirely escaped their notice, I observe that they are much concerned in regard to the financial position of Queensland. For instance, at the end of the last financial year we had in this State a deficit of £700,000, yet there was not a word from some of our newspapers regarding it; but there were indignant comments next day on the fact that the Labour Government of Queensland had a deficit of more than £400,000. So, whilst the local newspapers are not concerned with our own financial affairs, they are very much concerned with those of Queensland.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think they are becoming accustomed to the local position?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I know very well what would happen if we were to get back to the Ministerial benches; the same chorus of general complaint would break out from those quarters absolutely silent to-day. However, I think they ought to at least apologise to the man who was Treasurer of the last Labour Government. We know that he became famous, or notorious as "Gone-a-million Jack." Not only was that term applied to him in Western Australia, but I am informed by friends in the Eastern States that in even Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland the Labour party had to fight their elections on the alleged sins of commission and omission of "Gone-a-million Jack" and his colleagues. He had become famous all over Australia.

Mr. H. Robinson: Then, I did you a good turn by putting him out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad that things have altered. I do not think that excessively

harsh and, in some cases, maliciously unjust criticism of the finances which was showered on the Labour Government was a good thing for the State; because the desire to down a political party in this instance had the result of injuring the standing and reputation of the State financially in other quarters of the world. I am glad that the criticism generally has eased off, that it has taken a more patriotic view of the situation, and I can only hope that if, in the changing fortunes of political parties, Labour should again attain to those benches opposite, the policy of the present day critics will continue. I said we were becoming accustomed to deficits. Perhaps it will be as well to go back to the time when we had a surplus; I think it was seven years ago. In June of 1911 the Government of the day closed with a small surplus.

The Minister for Works: Of £13,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We need not analyse the figures, but on paper that Government closed the financial year with a surplus of £13,000. I know that by the time we took office in October of that year, that small surplus had been converted into a deficit of £90,000. As a result of our nearly five years of office, I will say, if you like, we took over when there was no deficit and we left the Treasury with a deficit of £1,360,000. As a member of the then Government, I am prepared to accept full responsibility for that result. If it were of any service to do so, I could keep the Committee for some time in giving reasons and justification for the financial position at the time the Labour Government left office. It will be within the knowledge of all members of the Committee that we experienced very bad seasons. As a matter of fact, immediately after we took office the State was faced with the worst season on record, at any rate since it embarked on agricultural development. We were faced with difficulties of that kind, and we had also, of necessity, by virtue of the fact that we were a Labour Government, to increase our expenditure in many directions upon public services, services rendered to the community which were expected of us and clamoured for by the people generally. And whilst we had to face a situation of that kind, we were on the other hand denied any increased revenue by way of additional taxation.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You got magnificently increased revenue all along the line.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is of no account to talk about the increased revenue. The present Government have increased revenue all along the line, but in many cases the increased revenue means increased expenditure to earn it.

The Colonial Treasurer: In many cases a more than corresponding increase.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and it nullifies the whole effect of the increased receipts.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Only in regard to the business concerns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The fact is that Parliament refused to recognise the need for increased taxation at a time when it was es-

sential that increased taxation should be imposed: and amongst some of those strongest in their opposition to granting any increased taxation to the Labour Government, were members of the present Government. I remember the present Colonial Secretary saying that he for one would not agree to grant one additional penny for the Labour Government to squander. That was the term used, and it was on those grounds generally that the members who opposed us in this House and those responsible for the defeat of our taxation measures in another place, took up their attitude; they held that it was only granting further money for a Labour Government to squander. However, that is ancient history, and I do not wish to go any further into the causes that contributed to the deficit built up by the Labour Government. We, the members of that Government, accept full responsibility for what we did. But what was the financial result? If we take the last two years of our administration, we find that in 1914-15 we had a deficit of £365,817. That was the second drought year, the worst of all. In 1915-16, which was our last year of office, for we left in July of that year, our deficit amounted to £348,222, or a total for the two years of £914,000. It must be remembered that those were both war years, subject, I believe I am justified in saying, to just as great disabilities because of the war as have been the two years just gone by.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Hardly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think they were. During the first two years of war, the timber trade had ceased entirely. The shipping had suffered, not perhaps to as great an extent as in the last two years, still to a very considerable extent. As a matter of fact, there is very little difference between the two periods I am referring to. The effects of the war have been very little, if any, greater during the past two years than during the first two years of the war.

The Colonial Treasurer: There is not very much difference in the Railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will deal with the Railways later. The fact is that in those two years we had a deficit of £914,000. We went out of office and our friends opposite came in. What was the result? It is an old familiar tale, but it is worth repeating. During their first year the Liberal Government increased that deficit from £348,000 to £700,000. They more than doubled it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: And there was good reason for it, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course there was good reason. I never yet knew the Minister or member or financier who could not find reasons galore. But the outstanding facts are that in our last year of office, we were able to carry on with a deficit of £348,000, while in their first year of office our friends opposite increased the deficit to £700,000. Then there was a change, or a reconstruction, of the Government; and we have the next year, which closed in June last, with a deficit of £705,000—a record shortage, I believe, in the history of the State. But, in reality, that

deficit ought to have been increased by at least £21,000, for the Treasurer obtained last year £21,000 of land tax which, according to Parliament, did not properly belong to him and for which he has to suffer this year by way of a refund. So that actually the deficit last year, instead of being £705,000, was, allowing for that six months' land tax of £21,000, £726,000. That is, comparing those two years with our last two years of office, the present Government are half a million sterling to the bad in comparison with us. The deficit for the two years just expired was half a million pounds in excess of the deficit of that for the Labour Government's last two years.

Mr. Harrison: You cannot get at the loss represented by the earning energy which he left the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Was there none left during the last two years the Labour Government were in office?

Mr. Harrison: Not to the same extent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I admit that. But what is the explanation of the increased deficit? The Treasurer says that the whole of the present difficulty is due to two causes—increased interest and sinking fund, and decreased railway earnings. Those, according to the Treasurer, are the two big factors, though of course there are others. Let me examine that statement. Certainly, the increased expenditure payable in respect of interest and sinking fund is something over which the Treasurer and the Government have no control whatever. They ought to be given credit for their added responsibilities in this connection. But let me examine the statement, which has been made here, and also by the Colonial Secretary in another place. It has been made to appear that the whole of the difference is due to those two causes. Now in 1915-16, the last year of office of the Labour Government, the amount paid in interest and sinking fund was £1,664,137. In 1916-17, the first year that our friends were in office, the amount increased by £101,702. That is, our friends had to find, in round figures, £100,000 more for interest and sinking fund in the first year of office than we had to find in our last year of office. In the year that has just closed they had to find for interest and sinking fund £1,875,198, or an increase over the amount in our last year of £211,000. Now allowing for that £211,000, and comparing the deficit for the year just closed with the deficit of the year 1915-16, we still find the present Government £150,000 to the bad. The difference between the two deficits was, in round figures, £350,000; and if we deduct the £211,000 for increased interest and sinking fund we still have the present Government in comparison, £150,000 to the bad. I do not know what the real explanation is. Of course any number of explanations are offered. The Treasurer reverts to the question of the railway revenue. Undoubtedly, there has been a falling off in railway revenue. But wherever the receipts or the expenditure of any of the revenue earning departments may be concerned, the Government of the day have to accept some responsibility for administrative

The Treasurer has no responsibility whatever for that increased amount payable in respect of interest and sinking fund; but the Government of the day have to accept the responsibility for any altered position of the railway finances. It is, perhaps, a matter of policy on the part of the Government. If the railway revenue keeps on shrinking, then it is the duty of the Administrators of the day to see whether they cannot balance the loss of revenue by economies in working expenses. That is where one might expect the superior capacity or training or ability of financial men to come in. This is one of the cases in which a Government comprised of miners and engine-drivers and a carpenter and a lawyer might have been expected to fail. But it is not sufficient for the present Government to say, "Oh, it is the loss in railway revenue." What have the Government done in order to make good or counterbalance that loss in Railway revenue? We do know that they increased the railway fares and freights soon after they took office; though, of course, the present Treasurer was not a member of that Government. Generally the responsibility is theirs of shaping a policy which will effect economies in the department to make good the loss in revenue complained of by the Treasurer. In addition, the Treasurer has stressed the increased expenditure which he has had to meet, and much of which was unforeseen; that is to say, expenditure which had not to be met in former years. But the fact is that every year brings its own difficulties to every Treasurer. I do not suppose any year has gone by, or will go by, but the Treasurer of the day has had to face, or will have to face, some unforeseen, or hitherto unknown expenditure. Whilst it may be true that the present Government had last year to face a few unforeseen items of exceptional amount, such as the losses by flood, on the North-West cattle deal, and in other ways, still, other Governments have had to face losses of this kind as well; and as against these items of increased expenditure I think I am justified in drawing attention to the increased revenue received by the present Government over and above that received by their predecessors in certain directions. For instance, in the year just closed the Treasurer received from land and tax £20,957 more than did his predecessor in the previous year; and from income tax £7,835 more; from dividend duty £3,909 more; from the totalisator tax £3,938 more; and from stamp duty £3,684 additional; or a total in those five items of taxation of £50,323 more revenue than was received by the Treasurer in the preceding year. Against that, I now, the Treasurer has had big reductions. For example, in land and timber revenue there was a big falling off last year as compared with the previous year; and the same thing applies in other services. I am calling now only with the question of taxation, over which matter, after all, the Treasurer has very little control as regards the amounts brought in. The Treasurer spoke also of a loss of £40,000 on the North-West cattle deal of last year. I have been unable to trace that matter right through the Esti-

mates of Revenue and Expenditure. I see the expenditure, but I do not see the revenue.

The Colonial Treasurer: It is in Business Concerns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I accept the Treasurer's statement that there was a loss of £40,000 on last year's deal. But there were other increases in revenue besides those which I have mentioned. There is the increased interest on property transferred to the Commonwealth. In respect of this the Treasurer received last year £13,628 more than was received in the previous year. The increase, I understand, is due to some adjustment made at the conference of Premiers and Treasurers.

The Colonial Treasurer: It had been outstanding since 1914.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The present Treasurer has received the benefit of some outstanding accounts. From cattle from the Aborigines' Station there was an additional revenue of £5,000. From the State Trading Concerns the hon. gentleman received £25,000 more than was received in the preceding year. Those items, with the increases which I have just mentioned from taxation, make a total of approximately £100,000 revenue additional to what was received by the Treasurer's predecessor; and that increase ought to go a long way towards balancing the unforeseen expenditure mentioned by the Treasurer. The net result of last year's operations is, I was going to say, unsatisfactory, but that word is wholly inadequate to describe the result. As I have said, there are any number of explanations. The Treasurer himself has offered various explanations, and everybody has one of his own. But the bare fact stands out, that the result of the year's operations is a deficit of over £700,000; and, try to cloak it as we may, it is a staggering amount. We have now an accumulated deficit of £2,766,000, or over 2¼ million sterling. When we add to that the £636,000 deficit which will result if the Treasurer's forecast for the current year is realised, then at the end of this financial year Western Australia will have a total deficit of £3,402,000. That is equivalent to something like £11 per head of the total population of this State—almost equivalent to the national debt in some countries. And we are adding to that deficit on the present year's and last year's figures at the rate of £2 per head per annum. It is an appalling situation, and one which I venture to say cannot continue. Turning to the present year's figures, what do we find? After all, the outlook for the current financial year is even worse than the result of the year which has just closed; because we find that after having passed during the last session a number of taxation measures, which, according to the Treasurer's estimates, will bring him in additional revenue from income tax of £101,499, from dividend duty of £25,538, from totalisator tax of £16,287, and from stamp duty of £14,281, or a total of increased revenue from taxation measures of last session of £157,000, the net result will be about £130,000 because he has to refund £29,000 of the land tax, but he

cannot take credit for it last year and this year also. The taxpayers of the State will contribute by way of increased taxation something like £157,000 more than they did last year. In addition to that the Treasurer estimates to receive from land and timber an extra £22,384, and from harbour dues which cost the Government nothing to earn, he estimates an additional £10,821, or from increased taxation, land and timber, and harbour dues the Treasurer will receive approximately £200,000 more than he received last year. Notwithstanding that additional revenue we find the deficit is reduced or expected to be reduced by something like £60,000 of £70,000 only. That makes the position at the present time even worse than last year. One can perhaps look at deficits gone by and financial troubles gone by with a cheerful countenance if we have hope for the future, but there does not appear to be any in the financial statement.

The Colonial Treasurer: What are you going to do about the increased interest bill; I have no control over that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so, but I think I have shown, allowing for the increased interest bill, the Government have not succeeded in holding the finances where they were; that is the trouble. This year there is a slight improvement, but taking the past two years, allowing for the increased interest and sinking fund that has to be paid, the Government have not held the finances where they were when they took office—I mean the party of two years ago. There might be some explanation for that by reference to the war and the shrinkage of revenue.

The Colonial Treasurer: We have no war when it comes to earning our revenue.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What I cannot understand is why the war should be stressed so much now compared with Labour's war term, though any reasonable man must admit that the war has had a serious depressing effect on our finances, there is no question about that, but I cannot help remembering that neither the war nor anything else was admitted as any satisfactory explanation of the difficulties when we were in office. It was not admitted by members sitting on that side two years ago, or during the few months prior to our going out. In this connection I say that since the Treasurer has been in the House I have never found him to be harsh or an unfair financial critic taking him all round. At least he always appreciated the difficulties of the Treasurers in office, but whilst that is so, so far as the Treasurer is concerned, the same statement cannot be applied to any of his colleagues. For instance, the Attorney General, if I remember rightly, was sitting in opposition and all his colleagues and all their supporters inside the House and outside of it—

Mr. Nairn: I think you can exempt the Minister for Works.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They would not admit the war as an explanation of the financial position of the State when we were in office. It was due entirely to our bungling and in-

competent handling of the State's affairs then. But to-day it is due to quite other causes. The Government are receiving increased revenue. If the receipts have been shrinking in some directions, the total result is that there have been increases this year and it is estimated the Government will receive £260,000 more this year than last year. On the other hand, there is an estimated increase in expenditure of £191,000, so that after all, whilst the total revenue of the State keeps on increasing, there ought to be an escape or opportunity for effecting those economies which the Government came into office pledged to effect. If there was a general shrinkage all round, I admit the difficulties of the Government would be greatly increased. The one bright spot in the financial firmament is that of the State Trading Concerns and strange to say this was the policy that received even more criticism and condemnation on the part of our opponents than did the financial work of the Labour Government. Who would have thought only a few years ago when complaints were loud and long the land in regard to our policy of State trading concerns that the day would so soon arrive when the Treasurer would bless them as a help in his difficulties. In 1916-17 the profit from trading concerns was £47,000. In 1917-18 there was a profit of £72,500, and in 1918-19 there is an estimated surplus of £164,000, or a total for the three years £284,000. That is a nice little nest egg the Treasurer is getting which was not available to the Labour Government. Our position would have been worse to the extent £284,000 were it not for the despised State trading concerns. I remember we had to ride the gauntlet of a no-confidence motion in the House for having purchased one of the State steamships without Parliamentary authority.

The Attorney General: That was the gravamen of the charge.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That ship was purchased in war time and it has turned out to be an act of very great foresight on the part of the Labour Government even though they had to pay a war time price for the ship. She has been a wonderful success and it is a great pity indeed we did not purchase more ships. We had in our mind the purchase of one or two others, but for the difficulties raised here and in another place probably the Treasurer would have had another ship or two to help him out of his difficulties.

Mr. Munsie: We had one on the Estimates but it was wiped out in another place.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad the Treasurer gave the total amount expended on State trading concerns, because undoubtedly the impression is abroad in the country that something like one-half or three-quarters of the loan moneys borrowed by the Labour Government have been squandered in State Trading Concerns. That is the general impression but the figures given by the Treasurer in the Budget will be a timely refutation of that mistake. We find that the total sum was £1,054,977 expended. Of that amount £417,800 was expended in the Wyndham freezing works which is not yet revenue earning. That leaves a total amount of £637,081 expended on the

State Trading Concerns that are in general operation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The present Government are responsible for £100,000 of the Wyndham freezing works money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Treasurer's estimates of profits is realised this year, namely £164,000, we find that amounts to no less than 27 per cent. on the capital expenditure. That is not bad even in war time when there is profiteering and high profits.

Mr. Teesdale: There has been a bit of profiteering in regard to the "Kangaroo."

Member: The hon. member would have paid for it if the State steamer had not been there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even so, the profits shown from the State Trading Concerns would have been greater but for the fact that the Government had included a loss of £40,000 lost in the cattle trading from the North-West, which I contend ought not to be included in the State trading concerns at all. It ought not to be shown in the State trading concerns accounts because it is not a State trading concern. It might more properly be classed as a business undertaking, so that the net result would have been £40,000 better than the figures shown. With regard to the railways, the Colonial Treasurer gave us some figures tending to show his difficulty consequent upon the reduced earnings of the Railway Department. He showed that in 1915-16 the gross revenue over expenditure received by the Railway Department was £582,691. In 1917-18 the gross revenue was £374,203, or a reduction of £208,488.

The Colonial Treasurer: Your own went up in 1915-16 as compared with 1914-15.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The difference between 1915-16 and 1917-18 was £208,488. That is a big reduction for any Government to offer, but after all what have the Government done to counteract this? In respect to the Railway Department, which is the biggest revenue-earning and spending department in the State, it seems to me the Government have been very lax indeed. Early in the present year, or so far back at any rate as March or April, the Government decided not to renew the appointment of the present Commissioner for Railways, whose term expired at the end of June. Immediately the Government decided upon that policy it would have been a sound business proposition to introduce the legislation necessary to give effect to it. This House did not go into recess until early the end of May. At that time, during the last few weeks of the session, the Government knew that they did not intend to reappoint Mr. Short, and that it would be necessary to amend our Government Railways Act to give effect to the new policy, but notwithstanding this they took no steps to introduce the necessary legislation. Although Mr. Short has told that he would not be again wanted after the end of June, the Government asked him to carry on for another six months, namely, till the end of the year. The House has now been in session for something like 22 sitting days, or more than

six weeks, and we have not yet had before us the Bill which is necessary to give effect to the policy of the Government.

The Colonial Treasurer: A number of those sitting days was occupied with the Address-in-reply and the no-confidence motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not matter. We have spent three weeks discussing amendments to the Prisons Act and the Criminal Code. Were these measures of more importance than legislation to control a big spending department like the Railway Department? The result will be that when December arrives the Government will be again forced to ask Mr. Short to stay on for another six months, because after the Bill is passed it will be necessary to advertise extensively in the Eastern States for a new Commissioner or new Commissioners. That cannot be done in two or three weeks, or even in two or three months. A period extending over some few months will be necessary, in order to make complete investigations and decide on the appointment. We can, therefore, safely say that no appointment will be made, even if the House agrees to the policy of the Government, in time to allow Mr. Short to retire at the end of December. Could anything be more fatal to the effective administration of this department than to have a Commissioner in charge with a sword hanging over his head, who knows that he is going out at any day, and that, in fact, he is dismissed? Is this fair to the Commissioner or to the Government or to the country?

Mr. Nairn: It is not fair to the country.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is it fair to the Railway Department, which has an earning and spending capacity bigger than any other department in the State, and which on the Colonial Treasurer's own showing, has such a material bearing upon the financial results of the year, that for a period probably totalling twelve months a Commissioner is kept on merely to oblige the Government, knowing that he will not be re-engaged? What defence can the Government offer for not having introduced an amending Bill on the first day that the Address-in-reply was disposed of? Surely if it was necessary to amend the Criminal Code or the Prisons Act—very necessary legislation in their way—the Bill to amend the Government Railways Act should have taken precedence. Even to-day we have other Bills, such as the Forests Bill, taking precedence over this Railway Bill. It does not matter whether these Bills pass early in this session or late, so long as they pass through this House during the present session. The Minister for Forests will admit that that is all that is required in the case of his particular Bill. It does, however, matter to the House and the country whether the amending Bill to the Railways Act goes through early or late. Every day and every week of delay means a prolongation of the present unsatisfactory conditions of affairs. Who is to blame, therefore, if the results from the Railway Department have not been all that they should be? The members of the present

Government are to blame for the manner in which they have dallied with this thing. The matter should not have been left for this session at all. There was ample time before the close of last session to secure the necessary amending legislation, but having failed to do that, it was the obvious and bounden duty of the Government to make it one of the first Bills that this House was called upon to deal with during the present session. Now after six weeks we find the Bill a long way down on the Notice Paper, and those responsible are apparently quite indifferent as to whether it passes this week or next session.

Mr. Willcock: Do you not think they know the personnel of the Commissioners?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not going to say that. This Chamber can refuse to pass the Bill. It does not matter whether they refuse or not. The Government have definitely decided not to re-engage the present Commissioner, and whether we have one Commissioner or three, the new appointment or appointments which will be necessary will require to be extensively advertised in order that a proper selection may be made. A department of this kind should not have been left for the past six months to drift in the manner in which it has been left. The Colonial Treasurer has practically exhausted the possibilities of getting additional taxation; the only thing left for him, therefore, is economy. I do not know whether the Government claim that they have exhausted all the avenues of economy in administration.

The Colonial Treasurer: I do not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad to hear the Colonial Treasurer say that. I know that he held pronounced views, as well as his colleagues, regarding the possibility of saving in this connection when he first took office, and prior to his taking office. Speaking on the Supply Bill in July of last year the Treasurer said that we had duplication of departments right throughout the service, that hon. members knew this, and that the State would have to put the knife into the bone of administration and other expenditure with a callous indifference to sentiment and without fear or favour. Have the Government discovered those departments which are duplicated throughout the service?

The Colonial Treasurer: A number of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What has been done with regard to them?

The Colonial Treasurer: We are getting the housing accommodation all fixed up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is always in the future. I admit there has been some little amalgamation.

The Colonial Treasurer: More than that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: So far as I can see, the only amalgamation which has taken place is that of the Water Supply and the Works Department. There has been an amalgamation of a few individual offices here and there, which after all means very little.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think that 60 men out of one department is fair economy?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not dealing with that now. I do not know to what department the Minister refers, but he probably means the Water Supply Department. Whilst there has been a reduction in the Water Supply expenditure, there has been an increase in the Works Department expenditure, so that it would appear that some economies in the Water Supply Department have been merely transferred to the Works Department.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In salaries alone this year in the Works Department there is an expenditure of something like £7,000 more than there was last year, and in the engineering branch an increase of something like £3,000.

The Minister for Works: There has not been a penny of additional expenditure put up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can only take the Estimates as they are presented. From these we find that there has been an increase in the Works Department in salaries alone of something like £7,000 above that of last year.

The Minister for Works: There has not been a penny increase in salaries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Estimates say so.

The Minister for Works: We will see when we get to them. It is quite clear.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not profess to know the details of the amalgamation. I can only take the figures as they appear in the Estimates. There may be a satisfactory explanation. These amalgamations are still in the future.

The Colonial Treasurer: Of course. When we get the space there is going to be a big economy. Your own colleague nailed that on the head, and that is what we are after now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am rather sceptical, because we have heard so much during the past year or two of economies, with very little result.

The Colonial Treasurer: I do not know. There is a sum of £25,000 in salaries alone this last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There have been some small economies effected no doubt, but what are they in the total? Is it not a fact that the present Government told the country that they could practically redeem the financial position of the State by an amalgamation of departments and by economy? No details were given, but by some extraordinary magic, which was going to be exercised, they were going to say "Oh, there will be no retrenchments, but an amalgamation of departments; economies will be effected on all hands by this amalgamation, so that without any increased taxation or retrenchment in the public service the finances of the country are going to be restored." That was the policy of the Government.

The Colonial Treasurer: Not of this Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. The Colonial Treasurer himself has said that he must cut

down to the bone, but has he cut to the bone yet?

The Colonial Treasurer: In lots of places.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has not yet reached the bone, but is still carving.

The Colonial Treasurer: You are putting an edge on the knife for me. I do not mind.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When I speak of the Colonial Treasurer I, of course, refer to the Government. In some of the departments we find not the slightest evidence of cutting to the bone, or of any attempt at economy. On the contrary, the expenditure has been going up. If we compare the Estimates for this year with those for 1915-16 we will find considerable increases. The Colonial Secretary was perhaps the sternest critic the Labour Government had. He said that he would not agree to one penny increase in taxation for that Government to squander. But what do we find in regard to the departments under his control? He is the prodigal son of the Government, and the fatted calf will only be killed by the taxpayers of this country when that hon. gentleman resumes his place as a private member in the political life of this country. We find that the departments under the control of the Colonial Secretary are responsible for an expenditure of something like £823,000; they all show increases on two years ago.

The Colonial Treasurer: They are quite justified.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are explanations of course. The increases in wages of the police accounted for £10,000, but would it not have been possible, whilst granting the increase to the police, to have balanced that increase by economies in other directions. Whilst nearly 35,000 of the able-bodied men have left the State during the past four years the strength of the police force has been fully maintained and even in places where the male population has been quite depleted.

The Minister for Works: It naturally would be.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then on that argument if the whole population left the country we would still require our police force. Of course, there are explanations, but right throughout the departments controlled by the Colonial Secretary we see increases everywhere. The much debated Education Department shows an increase in three years of £50,000.

The Minister for Works: How many young children require education?

Hon. P. COLLIER: There would not be many if the hon. member and some of his friends had their way. Whilst we have the statement of the Treasurer made in July of last year, that there is ample scope for economy and for retrenchment and for cutting to the bone, let me recall the statement made by the Treasurer in his Budget speech of a few nights ago. He then remarked—

I will endeavour to show how very limited is the amount which can be saved in this direction. The expenditure in the following departments—the Aborigines, Gaols, Lunacy, Medical, Public Health, and Charities, State Children and Education account for £823,000.

Then he went on to say—

Let hon. members ask themselves what economies can be effected here in a total expenditure of £823,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: Take education away from that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is for the Government to take the responsibility of saying what economies can be effected without throwing it upon the House. This House passed the increased Education Department Vote but possibly if the Government had brought down their Estimates without the increase, the House would have passed it without complaint. Possibly, I say. The Treasurer says now that no economies can be effected.

The Colonial Treasurer: I did not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is the position? The Treasurer said that if we effect economies to the extent of five per cent. it is as much as we can do. This would mean £20,000. That is a mere drop in the ocean. The Treasurer has changed his attitude entirely. Whilst the general policy of the Government when it took office was that of economy, we find to-day that the Treasurer practically scorns those who talk economy. This is what he said—

The uninformed are apt to think that a deficit could be easily avoided by economies, economies effected in administration. I hope that in future when we hear armchair and footpath financial critics say that our financial position can be easily remedied in this way that the people of the State will know that those critics are talking arrant nonsense.

The Treasurer now completely changes his ground. He says in effect that those who talk to-day of economy along the same lines that his Government spoke of 12 months ago are talking arrant nonsense.

The Colonial Treasurer: I did not say that at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Treasurer says that anyone who talks of wiping out the deficit by economies—the Treasurer is assuming something there, because I do not know anyone who has ever contended that the whole position can be straightened by effecting economies in administration.

The Colonial Treasurer: That does not refer to this House. It has been said outside.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have never heard a responsible person make such a statement, and I would be surprised to learn that anyone occupying a responsible position outside ever made it.

The Colonial Treasurer: One or two members in the Upper House practically said it quite recently. They are the people I was referring to.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Treasurer then was justified in saying that they were talking arrant nonsense because no reasonable person believes that it is possible to square the finances by effecting economies in administration. It seems to me, and I am mentioning this merely as a personal opinion, that the Government cannot hope to effect any great economies for the simple reason that it is impossible for a Minister to take hold of

a department and be able to put his finger upon excess officers or excess expenditure. Take the Lunacy, the Gaols, the Police, and the Education Departments. How can the Colonial Secretary go into the details of the expenditure of those departments and say, with any satisfaction to himself or to the country, that there is not unnecessary or excessive expenditure going on? It is utterly impossible. In the first place no Minister has the equipment, neither has he the technical knowledge to enable him to say whether the police force could be reduced or whether expenditure in other directions might be reduced as well. That applies all round. We do know that during the past year or two the Federal Government have appointed boards or commissions of inquiry to investigate the expenditure in many directions and particularly with regard to the Defence Department. We know also that the result of those investigations has been to bring to light instances where millions of pounds have been absolutely squandered and lost to the general public.

Mr. Teesdale: Were those paid boards?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think they were, but that is a very small item. If those investigating commissions had not been appointed, no doubt the people of Australia would never have known that there was one penny being squandered, say, in the Defence Department. I have no doubt that the men who were the advisers of the Minister for Defence, not only the military advisers, but the advisers with regard to general administration, had assured the Minister that everything was as it ought to be and that there was no waste or excessive expenditure. Investigations on the part of qualified people, however, proved that the position was otherwise and it is a question for the consideration of the Government of Western Australia now as to whether some capable and impartial body might not investigate the expenditure of some of our departments of State.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Teesdale: The sooner the better.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am aware of the difficulties which confront Ministers. I am not blaming them so much for not effecting economies because I know perfectly well that when they set out on the economy cry there would be very little results. I put forward this suggestion to the Government that it might be worth while to have some kind of investigation of the description I have just mentioned. Ministers cannot do it. They have neither the time nor the necessary qualification to overhaul a big department of State, and in mentioning this I do not say it in any derogatory way. It would be absurd to expect Ministers to do this. If a Minister went into one of our departments and he found the head office staff consisted of 50 or 60 people all told, he would question the responsible head as to whether there were any surplus officers there. Of course, that head would assure the Minister most solemnly that the office was right down on bedrock, that not another officer could be spared, and that every economy which could be effected had been effected. At the same time it might be possible to reduce that staff by even 25 per cent.

without impairing its efficiency. I have never known officers who will admit that their staffs are over-manned, and it is impossible for a Minister to say by walking through a department casually whether the officers are fully employed or whether there is any need for them there. Of course, I except the Minister for Works, who, I believe has been raking his department from one end to the other.

The Minister for Works: Have not the other Ministers?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not going to throw bouquets at every Minister.

The Minister for Works: Do not throw them at me.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to conclude my remarks by referring to the relationship between the State and the Commonwealth. In 1920 we shall be up against a very serious position and we shall then probably lose another half a million of revenue. Having regard to the attitude which is being adopted by the Federal authorities at the present time, I have no doubt whatever that they will make a serious attempt to cut off that revenue from the State. In that case, we shall be faced with a very serious position indeed. I can only join with the Treasurer and the Government in regretting that the finances of the State are in the position we find them to-day. If I have offered any criticism that the Treasurer may think unfair, I can assure him that it has only been offered with a desire to help, because I believe, after all, when times are bad, and the financial difficulties are great, more real assistance can be rendered to the Government of the day by criticism than by any deceitful support or eulogy which may be offered to them.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [7.30]: I do not propose to keep the Committee very long, but this is the one opportunity we have for giving attention to the finances, which certainly are the most important question the Committee has to consider. I agree with a good deal that fell from the leader of the Opposition. Particularly do I think his protest against the preparation of these Estimates was justified. The Committee ought to have the fullest possible information. The curtailments mean the denying to the Committee of information which we previously had. In many of the reports submitted to hon. members there is to be seen an inclination to cut down information, probably with the idea of curtailing expense. Yet we cannot afford to effect small savings at the cost of withholding necessary information from members. Even the "Statistical Abstract" of to-day contains only a portion of the information previously supplied. When the leader of the Opposition, on resuming his seat, was applauded, I could not help feeling that we had reached a stage when members are inclined to let things go. I think it was Omar who wrote:—

Unborn to-morrow and dead yesterday—
Why fret about them if to-day be sweet?

If that is the attitude of hon. members, it is, of course, useless to attempt to discuss the Estimates seriously. Notwithstanding that our taxation this year is £180,000 more than it was two years ago, the Treasurer has told us that we must be prepared to face an annual deficit of from £600,000 to £700,000. There was a time when the hon. member protested against deficits, when he said to the Wilson Government, "Before I agree to any increased taxation you must show me that you have practised economy to the fullest extent." Many members at that time thought he was right, but we now know that economy cannot be practised to such an extent as to make any material difference in the position. Year after year we may expect to go back £600,000 or £700,000, at least as long as the war lasts. We have been in the habit of referring to the growing deficit at the expense of our friends opposite. When Mr. Scaddan was Treasurer a great deal of money was borrowed, and for some years after the spending of that money the interest and sinking fund bill increased annually. We have now reached a stage when there should be no further increase in the interest bill because, of course, practically no loans are being effected. But there is a marked increase in the interest bill and it is due, of course, to the deficit, which is costing us anything up to £150,000 per annum. If we have to pay 6½ per cent. interest, hon. members will see that we must either have an increased deficit or pay increased taxation. The Treasurer is justified in exensing the financial position on the score of the war. No doubt our Railways are losing heavily through the war. The leader of the Opposition declared that in the earlier years of the war the position was just as acute as it has since become, and that it served to justify the Labour Government's deficit. But I would like to point out that year by year the position becomes more difficult. In the early days of the war we were able to ship a good deal of produce. We shipped a great deal of wheat last year, but shipping is daily becoming more difficult to obtain, and while that continues so long will the Railways show losses. Our Railways cannot avoid losses due to want of shipping freight, neither can we avoid an increased cost of administration in that department, because the awards of the Arbitration Court have given increases to the railway men. I doubt whether those increases represent any more than the increased cost of living, or even whether they approach it. The Treasurer referred to the trading concerns as being very profitable just now. The figures in connection with those concerns, as they appear on the Estimates, are somewhat confusing, for the amounts differ in several instances. I expect the position can be explained, but as it stands it is certainly unsatisfactory. Our ships have made money. The "Kangaroo" has made a great deal of money on account of the war. I am perfectly certain that those ships would not have been profitable had it not been for the war. Of course if all our ships were like the "Kangaroo" we

might expect to make money out of them, but unfortunately they are not like her.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The "Kwinana" has always paid.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: She is a pretty old boat, and it will be necessary to write off a great deal for depreciation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: She could be sold for three times what she cost.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then it would be a good plan to sell her, because after the war ships' values will fall. Notwithstanding this enormous increase in our taxation, we are day after day going to the bad, and each day a little more than the previous day. The difference is not very much, but it will amount to a material sum if a check is not put on this growing deficit. The trouble is that in this State we have facilities well ahead of population, and during the last four or five years we have not made any attempt to bring in additional people. There is not any railway in the State which is not justified. There are not too many miles of railway in the State, but there are too few people. If we can increase the number of our people the railways will become a magnificent asset. In my opinion the future of the country depends on the work of this Parliament. If that work is not satisfactory the future of the country will be set back for many years. If we are going to sit here and view with complacency the steadily increasing deficit, if it be for only the next two or three years, we shall find our load a very grievous one to bear. We have magnificent opportunities; I suppose there are not anywhere on the face of God's earth another 300,000 people that have as good opportunities as have our people. But it means work in administration if we are to achieve anything. If we turn to the votes set out in the Estimates it will be found that the important departments of Lands, Agriculture and Mines are very scantily supplied. I admit there is a considerable sum set aside for the destruction of rabbits by the Agricultural Department, but what I want to see is some attempt made to reach those opportunities which are ours. I believe we cannot reach them except by work here. If we are to increase production there must be some expenditure, some preparatory work, which is essential to the well-being of the State. I am quite ready to admit that we are making an attempt at Wyndham to market the meat of that district, but I would like to see an effort made to increase the number of cattle there. It would be a very simple matter if that country were properly protected, and if opportunity could be offered to men to go there in safety and establish stations. Given protection against the natives there, the number of cattle can be largely increased. The freezing works would then become a very great factor in the development of the State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why do you want additional police up there?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Men will not be found to take their lives in their hands and go into that country, as they did years ago. In the early days, as the hon. member knows,

the settlers themselves settled the native problem; but they would not be allowed to do it to-day, neither are they likely to take the risk. Then, no doubt, the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) is perfectly right when he says that the great thing for this State to-day is to attend to its primary industries. There is an opportunity for doubling the 2½ million pounds which we get for wool to-day. After all, it is not an expensive thing to do. We have the land, we have the stock necessary to develop new holdings, and we can increase our sheep if we set our minds to it. But, as I have said, some encouragement must be given. Last year I advised the Government that our pastoral lands should be well advertised in the Old Country. We cannot set up a station without money but surely we can get hold of people with money and develop the millions of acres that are now lying idle in the North-West. What is proposed in the way of developing the South-West? We are told that the policy of the Government is production. It is the only policy and the only means by which we can escape these ever growing troubles. It has to be remembered that on top of our own financial worries and the short revenue over expenditure we will have to find a million per annum at least towards the cost of the war for many years to come. We will have also to face about £200,000 interest on the deficit. This difficulty can only be satisfactorily overcome by a proper administration from now on. If no encouragement is given to the people to undertake the work of development, how is this likely to be accomplished? We know that without Government encouragement nothing will be done. This country has to be surveyed and opened up, if people are to be brought from the old land to settle here. There is no doubt that we can get them to come here, and that England will seek to build up a largely increased population in the Empire. They will also endeavour to grow in wealth and fighting strength by the development of the broad acres of the world. I believe after this war the British people will see their interests lie largely in the development of the dependencies of the Empire. We should take advantage of the opportunity when it comes. I know I shall be told by the Premier that the English people have no men to spare. They have, however, said to us in unmistakable terms, and deliberately made the offer, that they would send out people. We have just as definitely said we will welcome them here and provide for them. I want to see something achieved in this direction. The war looks like being over in a little time now, thank goodness, and when it is over we ought to be ready. I do hope the Committee will insist that the Government should endeavour to meet our troubles not half way, but meet them by making it possible for us to face the growing expenditure by an increase in population and an increase in production generally. If the people of this State realise that their increasing burden of taxation will not only be this £180,000, which has been imposed upon them during the last year or two, or come as a result of increased State

taxation, but that there will be still greater burdens put upon their shoulders by both the State and Federal authorities, they will begin to see what they are up against. I do not see how this position can be met, but it cannot be met comfortably by the people at present paying taxes unless production is increased and the people are given an opportunity of producing more and still more. The Government should look into this aspect of the question. It is not enough to say to the Committee that we should have realised when war broke out that we must face a deficit of £600,000 or £700,000 a year, and face it apparently without serious objection. We must endeavour to make it possible for the people of the country to pay their way without the taxation being a crushing burden, as it will be unless something is done. I have no fault to find with the civil service as a whole. There are many capable men in it. There are many officials in the Mines Department, for instance, who are doing good work and would do better if they were given an opportunity. In the Lands Department there are also many first class men capable of doing excellent work. So it is with other parts of the civil service. The leader of the Opposition said that a board ought to be appointed to go into questions of economy inside the departments. These departments are not of the vast magnitude that the hon. member imagines. If the permanent heads of departments were given more responsibility, and if we saw to it that the permanent heads were capable of administering the departments economically and well, half the trouble would be over.

The Colonial Treasurer: You are quite right there, but I suppose they are not capable?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then they should not be left in their positions.

The Colonial Treasurer: How are you to get them out?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Colonial Treasurer knows that many civil servants have been got out in the past. If they are not capable then they should not be allowed to hold their positions. It must be possible to put the right man at the head of each department. One man cannot be expected to manage the whole of a department. I think the managers of these departments should be capable men and unless they are capable they constitute a serious danger to the Government, the country, and the staffs under them.

Hon. P. Collier: The manager in many cases is appointed because of his professional qualifications. Take, for instance, the Asylum. The man who was appointed to that was appointed because of his professional attainments.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He was appointed because, in the opinion of those who selected him, he was a proper man to control that institution. It is not the fault of the doctor in charge of the asylum, but the fault of the system if everything is not quite right. If the Government think it is better to have in the asylum a business man as manager, and for a doctor to take charge of the professional work, that is a matter for the Government and this House, and not ground for blaming

the present holder of the position. When Doctor Montgomery was appointed to undertake the work he was appointed because it was felt that that should be the proper system. If the Government think that is not a satisfactory system let them alter it. It is not for us to attack the officials, and inquire into their work because of the system. The spower rests with the Government and Parliament. It is possible to get capable men at the head of every department, and to surround them by a sufficient number of other capable men to assist them in managing it. We probably cannot get capable men for the money we are prepared to pay. Even a man who is fourth down on the list is drawing a small salary. The accountants of the departments are also drawing a small remuneration, probably less than they would be getting if they were outside the service. It is only possible to have good men by making the permanent heads of departments responsible. I doubt if the Constitution contemplated that the Minister should manage the details of a department. In fact, I think it is against the Constitution to have it so. Certainly, with the changes that occur in Ministers, it is impossible to expect satisfactory economy in the management of departments under present conditions. I do not mean management of a department by effecting small savings. I mean economy that is both satisfactory and helpful to the people of the country and the State in general. We cannot get satisfactory and efficient management unless the permanent heads are recognised as the men who should control to a much greater extent than they do now.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): To what extent are they suppressed?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Honorary Minister ought to know how they are suppressed.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I know that it is the Minister who is suppressed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. The Minister gets his criticism and he deserves it. The Honorary Minister has always deserved criticism, and he has had it.

Hon. P. Collier: He was not spanked enough in the beginning.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If he had been corrected more in his earlier days of political life he would be more useful now. It is a natural thing for any new Minister to imagine that he knows what to do when he finds himself in control of a department.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Where are permanent heads suppressed by Ministers?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I will have to ask you, Sir, to suppress the Honorary Minister. When we have a running fire of interjections, such as have emanated from the Honorary Minister, it is impossible to follow them. How many permanent heads of the State have lost their jobs in the last seven years?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): None.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, a great many.

Mr. Willcock: Where is Mr. McNulty?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He was a deputy permanent head.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Under our system of Government the permanent head is subject to control by the Minister. He knows well that he is expected to give effect to the policy of the Minister. That is right. The Minister, however, knows that the permanent heads have no control over the appointment or dismissal of men employed in the department. It has been the system ever since the early days of responsible Government that Ministers are supposed to play a big part in the actual administration of the department. The solution of the trouble in the civil service is to broaden the powers of the permanent officials. The Treasurer has pointed out that we cannot cut away from the salaries of the officials any appreciable amount. We might get rid of every man in the service who is not busily engaged, and so save £500,000, but that would be very little indeed, and the results would not justify it. It is preferable to have officers of the service kept busy in every department, for that is much better than dismissing an officer here and there. We have cut down our agricultural expenditure by the dismissal of Dr. Stoward. He has been a decided loss, which apparently cannot be made good. It would be difficult to get a man equal to Dr. Stoward, who was badly needed in the State.

Mr. Smith: The Government have appointed Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know what the Government have done to replace Dr. Stoward. No satisfactory solution of the trouble has been arrived at. We have the great wheat belt absolutely unattended to-day. The Commissioner for the Wheat Belt is not permitted to go on with his work there. He has no time to do so, and is busily engaged in other directions. We have rust in our wheat crops, whereas if the farmers had been properly instructed they could be growing rust resisting wheat to-day. If rust does spread, it will lead to great loss both to the Treasury and people of the State. We want these officials kept at work, and do not want to save £100 by putting Mr. Sutton on a board and causing him to neglect his more important work. We want him kept at his work. There is no one attending to the development of the South-West, a most important part of the State. Economies of that sort are not economies at all. If we continue the policy of getting rid of men who are needed in the State, because it means the saving of a little money, we shall be making a great mistake.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): How much did these men accomplish?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: A very great deal in the early years; but lately very little, because they have not been allowed to do their work. Mr. Sutton, for example, is capable of accomplishing a great deal if only he is allowed to do his special work. Certainly, it is not Mr. Sutton's fault if he has not accomplished very much. As regards the South-West, Mr. Connor did all that was humanly possible. It is only during the last 12 or 18 months that people have shown a disposition to take up dairying here as in Victoria, be-

cause they find that dairy products have a ready sale. The interest now shown in dairying in our South-West may be largely due to the gospel preached by Mr. Connor. But what opportunity had Mr. Connor really to get the South-West developed? In my opinion, Mr. Connor was the right man for the position; but whether Mr. Connor was the right man or not, some official of that type should be employed by the State to develop the South-West. I shall not discuss the Estimates in detail. They are the same Estimates as ever. The Treasurer's Miscellaneous Services Vote is very largely reduced on the expenditure of two years ago; but then it was swollen by the payment of £45,000 lost through the official appointed by the Government to import wheat. The position which the Government must face is that the people who contribute, one way or another, five millions to the revenue, have a right to make requests, and to have reasonable requests attended to. I am well aware, of course, that very little of our revenue of five millions is clear revenue; that very much of it is absorbed in the earning of it, and in special services. Some of the earning services are too costly to be of much use to the Treasurer. But even in bad times people have wants. When one is in the greatest trouble, as we are just now financially, that is the time when one wants to do unusual things. We should endeavour to help the people to develop their lands and to engage in industry. Merely on account of the deficit we cannot stop road construction; we ought to have more roads; and we ought to have more railways, too. If the revenue of the country is to be considered, then it is very much better to build a line of railway through undeveloped country than to repurchase an estate. I am fully aware that railways cannot be built just now. But we cannot get out of our troubles by sitting still and crying, "We have done enough in the matter of facilities for opening up the country." From day to day one hears of new industries to be established here. But the country's first duty is to provide food for the people. Industries are now being started on food which is to a large extent important—to the extent of about five-twelfths. Primary industries must be established before secondary industries can be satisfactorily initiated. We cannot initiate them on imported foods. With the people in the country to-day, we can produce every pound of butter and bacon we require, if only proper encouragement is given to the people already on the land. The Government's duty is to encourage production on these lines, and to supply the factories necessary for the production of our butter and bacon requirements. The Government might be congratulated upon the speech delivered by the leader of the Opposition, who got in some very good work indeed, while he was particularly considerate. The Committee might well congratulate the hon. gentleman upon his moderation. Our desire is to help the Government, if it be possible to help them. So far as I see, it is impossible to help a Government who say, "We have done the best we can; we stand firm, losing £600,000 a year, and we are content." If the Government will by some means or

other increase the opportunities of the taxpayer to contribute to the revenue, they will have my support. But in the other alternative I consider the Government ought not to be supported. There is nothing new in the Estimates; they are just the same old Estimates dished up again, merely with different totals.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [8.8]: I congratulate the Government on the manner in which the subject of the Estimates has been introduced to-night. Most hon. members who have read the Orders of the Day must have been prepared to deal with subjects other than the Estimates. No doubt the Government's desire is to get their Estimates through as speedily as possible, and to prevent members from having the opportunity to speak generally thereon. The leader of the Opposition drew attention to one very important matter—the elimination of a column specially valuable to young members of this House. That is a type of economy which I fail to understand. Some comment has been offered on the question of the Commissionership of Railways. While I agree that the matter should not be hung up, I am not entirely in accord with the idea of having three Commissioners. My own view is that a good deal of injustice has been done by members to the present Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: Still, whether we are going to have one Commissioner or three Commissioners, the matter ought to be settled at an early date.

Mr. PICKERING. On that point I am entirely with the leader of the Opposition. The arguments adduced in that connection by the hon. member seemed to me irrefutable. The Treasurer admitted, in reply to a remark of the leader of the Opposition, that all avenues of economy had not been fully availed of yet. I am prepared to admit that the Treasurer has done much to effect economies, has done as much as has been possible up to the present; and I have every confidence that he will continue in the course he has set himself. The Government are to be congratulated on the well merited increase granted to civil servants in the junior grades, and to the junior railway officers; and also on the adjustment of the rent for railway officers' quarters. Everybody who knew anything about our railway system was cognisant of the fact that the railway officers were paying excessive rents for their quarters. The Minister has now, I believe, arranged fair rentals. A feature of these Estimates which distresses me is the impossibility of tracing in them any provision for freezing works.

The Colonial Treasurer: That will come in the Loan Estimates.

Mr. PICKERING: Should there not appear on these Estimates some provision to cover expenses up to date? I see nothing to indicate that any steps whatever are being taken by the Government regarding freezing works, one of the most important factors for Western Australia to-day. Any delay in this connection can only bring condemnation on the Government. Ministers have been asked from this side of the Chamber whether they intend to push on with the work. Up to date the

Country Party have not had occasion for satisfaction in that matter. I hope the Loan Estimates will contain an item for freezing works, so that Mr. D'Ebro's recommendations may be carried out. There is also the question of the A.F.L. jam factory. I have been carefully through the file dealing with this factory, and I regret to say that I agree the position is most unsatisfactory. The Auditor General condemns roundly the unbusinesslike manner in which that factory has been conducted; and that condemnation is, unfortunately, endorsed by the company's own auditor. The position is very unsatisfactory for the Government; but in view of the small amount required to place the undertaking on a financial footing the country should be prepared to advance that sum, providing the company is properly reconstructed and the Government have control over the expenditure of the funds and the conduct of the business.

The Colonial Treasurer: We want a different directorate.

Mr. PICKERING: I quite agree with the Treasurer. If the Government advance extra money, they should have representation on the directorate. I trust there will be no attempt to turn this jam factory into a State trading concern, because it would be impossible to run the factory under those conditions. I indicated to-day, in the form of notice of a question, the urgent need for the provision of a potato inspector in this State. In the late Mr. Bratby the State lost a most valuable servant.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Hear, hear!

Mr. PICKERING: Mr. Bratby was a man who devoted the whole of his time to his work, and was always endeavouring to place the potato growing industry on a sound basis. He also went extensively into the Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs Act; and I am sure that, had he but lived, his information and advice would have been of considerable value to the State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He was slated.

Mr. PICKERING: I was not one of those who slated him. I very much regret Mr. Bratby's death. I very much regret, also, that the State did not appreciate the value of his services. My impression is that he was paid at the rate of 12s. 6d. per day, a remuneration ridiculously out of proportion to the value of his work. I trust that in the early future the Government will give consideration to the need for appointing a qualified successor to Mr. Bratby, and at a salary commensurate with the importance and responsibility of the work. I want the inspectors to safeguard the interests of potato growers, and that, too, is the desire of everyone interested in the industry. The Commissioner for the South-West has been removed and we have an officer in his place who, while I admit his abilities, I must also confess is not qualified to occupy that position. I do not know what the intention of the Government is, but I can assure them it is important that the position should be filled by an expert officer. I hope the Gov-

ernment will take this matter into consideration at an early date.

Mr. Smith: We want a clean sweep in the whole of the Agricultural Department.

Mr. PICKERING: It would be well if we had a Royal Commission appointed to investigate the working of the Agricultural Department, and I would like to be one of the Commissioners. One of the services which has been dwelt upon extensively by the leader of the Opposition has been that of the Railways. We know very well that the service which we get at the present time is entirely inadequate. For a long time the Country party, and other members in this House, have been endeavouring to induce the Government to inaugurate a system of motor trains. I recently asked a question in the House in this connection and in support of that question I pointed out the success which had attended the motor services installed by the Emu Railway Company in Tasmania, a privately owned concern. The company are able at the present time to put on carriages which will convey 40 passengers with their luggage, and the experiment has proved a profitable one. In view of the stringent period we are going through, and the difficulties experienced by the Railway Department in providing services in the agricultural districts, the Government should not lose any time in the direction of installing motor services in those districts where it does not pay to run trains. I represent a part of the State which is languishing for railway facilities. We have there one of the most up-to-date butter factories in the State, and that factory cannot get the full measure of support which it deserves because of the inadequate railway service. I have petitioned the Commissioner of Railways in the direction of securing better facilities, but my petitions have been in vain. If the difficulty can be overcome by a system of motor trains, it is due to the Government to make complete inquiries in that direction and to lose no time in installing the system. Not only is the portion of the State which I represent affected, but also every district where spur lines run. There is another question, too, which is of importance, and it is that relating to motor ambulances. At the last conference, the farmers and settlers informed the Minister for Railways that they would be prepared to assist the Government if this matter could be taken in hand. I think, therefore, that the least the Government can do, in view of the grave difficulties experienced by people living in distant parts of the country, and the dangers they are subjected to on account of illness or accidents, is to lose no time in the direction of making inquiries with a view of providing a motor ambulance service. With regard to the development of the South-West, we had an illustration the other evening of the kind of sympathy that portion of the State receives at the hands of some members of the Government. The Minister for Industries, when he was replying to the second reading debate on the Forest Bill, and when it was highly improper for him to do so, because no one had the right afterwards to reply to his remarks, took the opportunity of making disparaging remarks about the South-

West. It would be a good thing for the Minister for Industries if he could obtain a few years' practical experience in that part of the State. He would then change his tone and he would not indulge in ridicule. This Minister had the audacity, the colossal impudence, to describe my electors as lazy men.

Mr. Teesdale: Who was the scoundrel?

Mr. P. L. KERING: I guarantee that there is no part of the State which has more energetic and more hardworking people than the Sussex electorate. At the same time there is no part of the State which has greater difficulties to overcome; it is one of the pioneer parts of the State, and it is on account of the lack of consideration on the part of past Governments, and the rotten system of the Agricultural Bank, that the electorate I represent is not in the forefront of Western Australian development to-day. I only hope that the Minister for Industries will go to the South-West at some time in the near future, and I can assure him we will put the boot into him quickly. I do not intend to take up any further time on the general discussion. In conclusion, I hope the Government will not view from a narrow standpoint the interests I represent, but that they will widen their hearts and take an early opportunity of amending the Agricultural Bank Act in the direction of enabling the settlers in the South-West to derive some advantage from that institution, an advantage which certainly ought to be different from that extended to settlers in the eastern districts where conditions are so much more favourable. There is nothing else I wish to say which cannot be said when the items are being considered.

Mr. H. ROBINSON (Albany) [8.20]: I was pleased to hear the leader of the Opposition take exception to the manner in which the Estimates have been produced this year. I endeavoured to make comparisons between the Estimates of this year and those of last year, but perhaps through lack of knowledge, or lack of Parliamentary experience, I have not been able to do so. But after hearing an ex-Minister of the Crown denounce the Government for submitting the Estimates in the present form, a form which is difficult for hon. members, especially hon. members new to Parliament, to understand, I do not think it will be out of place if I ask for enlightenment in one or two directions, and I hope the Treasurer will be able to answer the questions I am about to put to him. If he does do so it will probably save a good deal of time. Last year we voted for the secretary to the Premier the sum of £550. I notice in the Estimates for 1918-19 the amount is £700.

The Premier: There has not been an increase.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: I am not aware that Parliament authorised the payment of more than £550.

The Colonial Treasurer: I will be dealing with that in a few minutes.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: It is one of those matters that I would like to have explained. I hope the Premier will not take exception to my asking the question; I think I have the right to mention the matter, in view of the manner in which the Estimates have been presented.

The Premier: You will see a footnote there which explains it.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: If we pass a certain salary I have yet to learn that it is wise for Cabinet to increase the amount, especially by £150.

Mr. Cairn: You helped to pass the vote last year.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: I voted for £550, not £700. Then, with regard to the London agency, it will be remembered that even members of the Government voted in favour of a reduction. The amount last year was £1,404.

The CHAIRMAN: I would draw attention to the fact that we are dealing generally with the Estimates and not items.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: I am after information, and I would like the Treasurer to answer these questions. I notice that a promise has been made to increase the salaries of junior officers in receipt of £204 to £252, but I find also that increases have been made to senior officers, secretary to the Premier £550 to £700; Public Service Commissioner's secretary, £312 to £488; agricultural irrigation expert, £390 to £456; officer in charge of fruit industry, £240 to £260.

The Colonial Treasurer: I do not want to interrupt, but the individual items will be dealt with when we come to them. The hon. member cannot expect me to answer all his questions now.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: I was drawing attention to the fact that highly paid officers have received increases in their salaries.

The Premier: They are not increases.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: They have received increases to the tune of £1,100.

The Colonial Treasurer: Last year hon. members asked that all salaries should be put together, and in many instances that has been done. I can tell the hon. member that I am not going to answer his questions as to the individual items. The Ministers controlling the items can answer the questions when the time arrives.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: If that is the attitude of the Treasurer I shall bide my time, but of course it will delay matters. The Treasurer has adopted this attitude more than once.

The CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer is quite in order in objecting. We are not discussing individual items. The answers to the hon. member's questions will be given at the proper time.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: One reply would have answered all my questions and it would have saved the time of the House.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irvine—in reply) [8.26]: I want to join in the paean of praise which has been offered to the leader of the Opposition for his speech of this afternoon. There is no desire on the part of the Government to conceal anything. I must accept responsibility as Treasurer for the manner in which the Estimates appear before hon. members, but the probabilities are, as it will be found, that the complaints of hon. members are more apparent than real. So far as salaries are concerned, all have to be certified to by the Public Service Commissioner before the Auditor General

will pass them. I admit, however, that there are one or two instances, rather glaring instances, where information should have been given. Of course I did not see all the Estimates until they were on the Table of the House.

Hon. P. Collier: Some of the departments are bunched more than others.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I noticed that after I presented them, and I give the leader of the Opposition and hon. members the assurance that if it is found that the Estimates have been condensed too much detailed information will be supplied. There is no desire to keep anything away from hon. members. I desire to pay the leader of the Opposition the compliment that in the remarks he made this afternoon he, in several instances, assisted me by his criticism. It would be unwise if we did not realise that criticism, which was honest and fair, was helpful, and coming as it did this afternoon from one who himself was a Minister of the Crown, it will carry more weight and will be more valuable than it would have been if it had come from a private individual. I have no desire to follow the hon. member into the maze of comparisons; it would be difficult indeed for any hon. member to make relative comparisons which would convey no solid fact, but in regard to those comparisons between the years when he was a Minister, and the position as it is to-day, the main disturbing factor undoubtedly has been the war, and a further disturbing factor is this: in nearly all business undertakings everything we have wanted for them has gone up enormously in price; and the fact again occurs that we are frightened to cut too deeply into the services because the day after to-morrow there may be something to cause those things to expand, and we shall require assistance. The difficulty in dealing with public servants is that a large number have to be compensated, and that makes it a very difficult problem. I agree with the leader of the Opposition in this respect, that the probabilities are that both the State and the House ask too much from Ministers, and I will show the difficulty. If it comes to a business concern we can criticise business management and make comparisons, but we cannot in other concerns. However keen a business man may be, our business knowledge would come out just like an opossum out of a log, with his hair up; when dealing with men we are dealing with technicalities, and the consequence is we ought to be able, and are able in many instances to criticise the expenditure without the department. The skilled men say, "We must have this and that; it is necessary. If it is taken away what are we going to do? It places us in an extremely difficult position." I say this unhesitatingly: I do not like to urge that we have not had the time, but the House only adjourned on 24th May. We have been sitting almost continuously. When I was a Minister before we had six clear months in which Ministers could work, but we have not had six clear days since I have been in Parliament this time. If we are going to do

really good service in the departments we have just as much right to have time to devote to the details. We should have just as much right as a man in private business. But we cannot have the work sandwiched in between spasmodic attempts, especially at a time like this. I thank members for their generous criticism. I believe that, right down in their hearts they realise that more cannot be done, and that has made the criticism of the Budget speech more pleasant than otherwise. I have nothing further to say than to thank hon. members.

General debate concluded; votes and items discussed as follow:—

Votes—His Excellency the Governor, £1,549; Executive Council, £44; Legislative Council, £381; Legislative Assembly, £1,698; Joint House Committee, £3,980—agreed to.

Vote—Joint Printing Committee, £4,595:

Item, Printing and Distribution of "Hansard."

Hon. P. COLLIER: Some time last session the Printing Committee in conjunction, I understand, with the Colonial Treasurer, made some alteration in regard to the printing and distribution of "Hansard," and effected considerable saving in the cost. I have no fault to find with the action taken on that occasion, as I understand it resulted in the saving of several hundred pounds, except in one respect. It is a great weakness in not having the questions included in "Hansard." Very often, as members know, a reply to a question conveys more information than perhaps does a speech of an hour or two.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is an advertisement for members.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The advertisement is obtained through the medium of the newspapers, and not through "Hansard." The inclusion of the questions and answers in "Hansard" is for the use of members afterwards. Often members wish to turn up a reply given to a question, but there is no means of finding it. There is no index to the questions now, the only place in which they are to be found is in the "Votes and Proceedings," but there again a member has no idea of where to look for them, and has to search through the whole of the "Votes and Proceedings" of the session, as there is no index. I am given to understand that it would increase the cost by £100 or £200 to include the questions in "Hansard," but I can hardly believe the difference would amount to so much. I do think, for the convenience of members, that the questions should be included.

Mr. Smith: Dispense with the cover.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I would not mind going further and saving expense by condensing speeches if necessary. But questions include information of great value at times, and at present one does not know where to find the questions and answers. I hope the Printing Committee will see their way in the future to include the questions in the weekly "Hansard."

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Last session it was intimated that "Hansard" was expensive and

perhaps it would be wise to consider some other means of having the speeches of members published. With that view the Printing Committee went into the whole matter. It is absolutely necessary for the questions to be printed in the "Votes and Proceedings," and it was the desire of the Printing Committee to produce "Hansard" as cheaply as possible with efficiency. Last session the questions were left out of "Hansard," but continued in the "Votes and Proceedings." This year the member for Kalgoorlie asked a question in regard to the inclusion of questions and answers in "Hansard," and the matter was again gone into with the Government Printer, and he pointed out that it could be done but with additional expense. In view of the fact that the questions and answers are in the "Votes and Proceedings," it was thought that we should not increase the cost by also having them printed in "Hansard." It is with little difficulty that members can find them in the "Votes and Proceedings." They are indexed, and I think they are almost as readily found as in "Hansard." But it was on the score of expense that they were removed from "Hansard." The whole matter has been discussed, that of producing "Hansard" with efficiency so as to be acceptable to the House, and last year there was no debate on the vote. Two reports from the Printing Committee have been presented to the House, and adopted. Some members of the Printing Committee are accustomed to Press work, which is of advantage to the other members of the Printing Committee, and the Government Printer has been called before the committee and questioned on the matter.

MR. MALEY: I notice on the Estimates for 1918-19 no provision is made for the printing and distribution of "Hansard." Is it intended to cut "Hansard" out?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: All printing is now charged up in one department. The same is done in connection with several matters, motor cars, printing, telephones, lighting, all are charged up and administered by one department, so that a check is kept.

MR. MALEY: I think it most desirable that members of the Committee should know what items of printing are being included.

HON. P. COLLIER: I take it that the Printing Committee have no views on this matter other than to give effect to the wishes of members generally. I still say that it is very inconvenient to have the questions omitted from "Hansard." Whilst it may be true that the bound volumes of "Votes and Proceedings" are indexed, there are other aspects of the question. For instance, public libraries and other institutions are supplied with bound copies of "Hansard" but have not the "Votes and Proceedings." Moreover, the Treasurer, or his department, has charged me, and I presume other members also, 8s. for the bound copies of last year's "Hansard." I have those bound copies at home, but I have not the "Votes and Proceedings" at home, and I say the records of the House are not complete in these bound copies of "Hansard" unless they do contain the questions and answers. It is only in the House that information can be obtained from "Votes and Proceedings," and seeing that I now

pay the Treasurer for my "Hansard," that I buy from him a bound copy of "Hansard," I have the right to expect a complete copy with a full record of what took place. If I want to turn up some information contained in an answer to a question I ought not to have to leave my home and come here to get it from the "Votes and Proceedings." While we have pages and pages of speeches containing only members' opinions, we have contained in a reply to a question definite specific information which is of considerable value to members. I say the saving effected by omitting the questions from "Hansard" does not compensate for the incomplete form in which "Hansard" is now published. I hope the Printing Committee will go into the matter again and reconsider the question of including the questions in "Hansard." I do not know what the cost involved may be, but it cannot be sufficient to justify the cutting out of the questions. The House has decided to retain "Hansard" as a record of the proceedings. That record ought to be complete, and it is not complete while questions are not included in it.

MR. NAIRN: Who has the authority to say what should be cut out of a speech made in the House?

HON. G. TAYLOR: In reply to the leader of the Opposition, as Chairman of the Printing Committee I am prepared to promise that the Printing Committee will again go into the question, and if the expense involved is found to be of any great magnitude it will be submitted to the House, and left to the House to decide.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Mailey raised the question of the printing of "Hansard." On page 71 of the Estimates he will see the amount involved in the printing. That includes the cost of "Hansard."

MR. MALEY: Where does it say "Hansard"?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is all lumped in that item. While on the subject of "Hansard," let me say I agree with the leader of the Opposition. Formerly each member of the House used to receive, and I think can get them now if he applies, bound copies of "Votes and Proceedings." I have something like a couple of tons of them at home, but I have never yet referred to them once. In "Hansard" the questions and answers are really a necessity. I would like to make a suggestion to the Printing Committee. There may be some question about the setting up of the type. I do not know much about printing, but I see no reason why the "Votes and Proceedings" should not be set up in the same type as "Hansard." Then it should not be a very difficult matter to lift that type and use any part of it in "Hansard."

MR. NAIRN: I wish to endorse the remarks of the leader of the Opposition. I do not think he quite gathered the meaning of an interjection which I made when I asked him who should have authority to excise certain parts of a speech delivered in the House. If we permit that, we are going to introduce a bad principle indeed.

HON. P. COLLIER: I agree.

MR. NAIRN: I have no personal complaint to make, except that I recognise the principle is very bad indeed, and one which might lead to undesirable consequences. We want "Hansard" complete or not at all. It is of no value unless it is there in its completeness. Because, sometimes a sentence, or even a word, contains more than columns of speech, and I want that principle not to be taken away or violated. So long as we have

"Hansard" we should have it complete. I endorse the remarks of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MALEY: In considering Division 37—Printing—in conjunction with the printing and distribution of "Hansard," I would like to point out that it shows a decrease as compared with the previous year, both in Subdivision 1 and Subdivision 2, of approximately £500, and yet this year they have the printing and distribution, which is practically undertaken in Subdivision 2, under the heading of Joint Printing Committee, which meant an expenditure last year of nearly £2,000. This may be one of the instances in which the Government have really effected economy, but I would like to be quite sure.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I have tried to put the thing clearly. At the finish all these printing votes are to be paid for by one department this year. It saves something like 600 or 700 entries. There is no profit or loss, and in each department the person controlling it is responsible to all those heads to see that their votes are not exceeded. As a result, every other department has had its vote cut down by the amount of printing. When it comes to printing I will give the amount, this one amongst them. We have followed the British and South African principle in this. Let me give an illustration: We had to charge up lighting. The lighting cost was centred in the Department of Works. By centring it in one department we get a reduction in the total consumption. They took 2,780 entries to put it through. So we said, "Where we are making no profit or loss, what is the good of keeping a staff to enter it up?" So we put these votes all together and deducted it from the amount hitherto allowed on the Estimates.

The Minister for Works: You keep a check on it?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes, the Government Printer is made responsible. He can say, "I am controlling that vote, and you are required to have your work done on this paper or on that paper, and your envelopes must be so and so."

Mr. Smith: Have you reduced the cost of printing?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It was reduced by £7,000 last year.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Joint Library Committee, £400—agreed to.

Vote—Premier's Office, £1,865:

Item, Secretary to the Premier, £700.

Mr. FOLEY: In last year's Estimates we had £550 for this officer. This year it is shown as £700. The footnote explains that it includes £150 as Commissioner under the Postponement of Debts Act, 1914. For many years this item has been a hardy annual. When the late occupant of the post went to England, we thought we were rid of it, but we now find that the salary has grown from £550 to £700. I want to know from the Premier whether the duties of the secretary to the Premier are as important as those of say, the Under Secretary of Public Works. Another £150 has been added to the salary. It seems to me that the present occupant of the position has out-Kesselled Kessell. I want to be frank. The position includes £150 a year in connection with the post of Commissioner under the Postponement of Debts Act. I want to get an assurance from the Premier that this extra amount is well spent. We have always

been led to believe that the gentleman occupying the position of secretary to the Premier is the busiest man in the State. The question now is, if he is the busiest man in the State, how can he find time to carry out the extra work involved in this other position?

Mr. H. ROBINSON: The present occupant of this position is in my opinion a most courteous officer and helpful to all who go to him, but what I want to know is why in 1904 the salary for the office was £238, and what the extra duties now attached to the position are to warrant a salary of £700.

The PREMIER: There is no increase in the salary. We have simply adopted the practice which members desired of putting all the amounts received by the individual officer in one item. The salary paid to this officer as Commissioner under the Postponement of Debts Act did appear in another part of the Estimates, but has now been placed under the one item. The actual salary is £550, exclusive of this extra £150, which has only been paid for the last two years. I may say that Mr. Shapcott had nothing to do with his appointment as Commissioner. This post was previously held by the present Public Service Commissioner, but upon receiving the appointment of Public Service Commissioner he relinquished it and strongly recommended that Mr. Shapcott should be appointed to the position.

Mr. Smith: Was it because Mr. Shapcott's time was not fully occupied.

The PREMIER: That is not the question. Mr. Shapcott at first declined to accept the position and another officer was suggested. After being pressed, however, Mr. Shapcott accepted it. The work he has to do is done to a large extent at night time. He has performed his duties well. He is possessed of considerable tact, and the fact of his being in the Premier's office assists him very considerably. He has frequently been the means of settling disputes between creditors and debtors and saving the necessity for litigation, and he has fixed up many of these delicate questions to the satisfaction of all parties. Mr. Shapcott is an efficient and most capable officer, and can get through a very large amount of work in a very short time. He is also quick and alert and a good administrator, and is able to do this extra work and carry out his duties as secretary to the Premier with satisfaction. As soon as the moratorium ceases the position lapses. I think there must be some mistake regarding the statement that in 1904 the salary attached to the position was £238.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think I can throw some light upon the early history of the position of secretary to the Premier. Mr. Kessell was a shorthand writer to me as Commissioner for Railways at a salary of £4 a week. He went on an inspection trip to Que with Mr. (now Sir Walter) James. So pleased was Mr. James with his work that he approached me with a view to securing his services in his office. I let him go, and understood he was to receive £5 a week. Mr. Kessell, however, managed to push himself on until, I believe, he got about £500 a year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We are discussing the position and not Mr. Shapcott, whom we know to be a good officer. I am of opinion that £700 a year is too much for this position. How can the extra work involved be done out of office hours?

Mr. Smith: It is impossible.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Mr. Shapcott must see the persons making claims for money owing during office hours. When he took on this job it was about the time when Mr. Scaddan became Minister for Railways. Mr. Shapcott used to get £50 a year as clerk to the Minister for Railways in addition to his salary as secretary to the Minister for Mines. When Mr. Scaddan became Minister for Railways that £50 was transferred to the secretary to the Premier, who had been secretary to the Minister for Mines. The secretary to the Minister for Mines was reduced correspondingly. The present position is that the £50 is still being paid to the secretary to the Premier and also being paid to the Secretary to the Minister for Mines, as this Minister is also administering the Railway Department. The secretary to the Premier did not suffer a reduction of £50, although the extra work passed away from him. Now we have a proposal to increase that officer's salary by a further £150. I favour the giving of this money to someone else—say to a returned soldier. The Premier has told us that this special work can be done after business hours; from which it follows that the work cannot be very great in quantity. Let the work of the £150 be given to some officer not receiving anything like £550 per annum—say to some civil servant who has returned from the Front, wounded: it would assist towards the restoration of his health.

The PREMIER: The Government in this matter have to be guided largely by the advice of the Public Service Commissioner, who in April of 1917, when this question cropped up, wrote to the then Premier, as follows:—

It will be necessary for me to devote the whole of my time to the duties of the Public Service Commissioner. I therefore beg to resign the office of Royal Commissioner under the Postponement of Debts Act. For your information I might explain that applicants for relief under the Postponement of Debts Act, as well as those seeking relief under the Commonwealth moratorium, are generally persons who are more or less in a desperate financial position. For the successful carrying on of the duties attached to this position it is essential therefore that my successor should be an officer possessing the qualification of extending a sympathetic hearing to debtors, and who is also capable of forming a correct judgment of the position after hearing both the debtor's and the creditor's statements. After carefully considering the various officers who, in my opinion, would be likely to satisfactorily fill this position, I beg to recommend that Mr. Shapcott, of your department, be appointed if he can be made available for this work in addition to his present duties. When I was first appointed Commissioner under this Act, it was proposed that my salary should be increased from £504 to £756 per annum, but, for departmental reasons, the amount was afterwards fixed at £636 per annum. To carry out the duties satisfactorily and successfully is worth more than the allowance I have been receiving, viz., £132, and if you approve of my proposal I would recommend that the amount paid be at the rate of £150 per annum.

That is how the appointment came about. Mr. Shapcott rather resisted taking on the position, but was pressed to do so, and this is the result. The item appears on the Estimates for the second time. It appeared last session and was passed, but it did not then appear under this item. It

is being attacked now because it has been so presented that hon. members can see the exact position.

Mr. SMITH: The Premier has accused me of attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the Committee. I deny the soft impeachment. I believe in always paying a good salary to a good man. Undoubtedly, Mr. Shapcott is a very capable officer, and most courteous and obliging, but the point, to my mind, is that the emoluments drawn by Mr. Shapcott are greater in proportion, than those paid to other more important public servants—to give a few instances, the Under Secretary to the Treasurer £708, or only £8 more than Mr. Shapcott; the Commissioner of Taxation, a very important officer, £850, or £50 less than Mr. Shapcott; the Inspector General of the Insane, drawing only £8 more than Mr. Shapcott; the Commissioner of Police £672, less than Mr. Shapcott's salary; the Director of Education, £750; the Principal of the Training College, £552; the Principal Architect £600, or £100 less than Mr. Shapcott; the Under Secretary for Law, £10 less than Mr. Shapcott; the Registrar of Titles £550; the Government Printer £600; the Under Secretary for Mines £552; the Government Analyst £800. All those positions should be filled, and I think are filled, by competent professional men; and the secretary to the Premier is not a professional man in the accepted sense of that phrase. I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle that the position might very well have been given to a man drawing less than Mr. Shapcott. For instance, there is the secretary to the Workers' Homes Board, whom I do not know personally, but of whom I do know that he draws a salary of about £5 per week while responsible for very large expenditure, and that he comes in contact with the very people whose cases are considered by the Postponement of Debts Royal Commission. It is nonsense to say that the bulk of this Royal Commission work is done by Mr. Shapcott after office hours. How can these people who do not know Mr. Shapcott find him after office hours? The thing is absurd. The emoluments drawn by Mr. Shapcott are altogether out of proportion to the importance of his office.

Mr. FOLEY: I am sure the leader of the Opposition will agree that Mr. Shapcott is as good and as diplomatic and tactful an officer as one could meet. Even a man who has been turned away from the Premier's office by Mr. Shapcott, and prevented from seeing the Premier, departs under the impression that a compliment has been paid to him. The principle involved is what I want to criticise, and it is that, where extra work is required to be done, it should not be given to officers in receipt of high salaries. So far as the men on the lower rung are concerned, whenever additional work is given them to carry out, the department invariably takes whatever payment is made for it and pays it into Consolidated Revenue. That is proved by what has taken place ever since the Railway Department took over the Savings Bank work at the various stations in the country. I know of one instance where a man in receipt of £164 per annum was in charge of a station 600 miles from Perth, and where the work was as heavy as it is at West Perth. This man carried out the duties at that station single-handed, and it often took him from seven in the morning until nine at night to complete his day's work. In addition to all that he had the Savings Bank duties to attend to

for which he did not receive anything. My contention is that once an officer leaves his office he should not have any more duties to perform.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am against the principle of the payment of extra allowances. So far as the secretary to the Premier is concerned, we admit that the position is worth £550 and the duties attached to that position should be sufficient to keep the officer busy. Whenever additional work is provided, the general rule is that another clerk is engaged and the work is given to that officer to perform.

The Premier: It was not so in this case.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We have had the assurance that the secretary to the Premier is a busy man, but the work under the Postponement of Debts Act is important, and it must take up a lot of his time.

The Premier: There are delicate questions which require to be handled.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am opposed to the principle of extra allowances, and as the gentleman in question has expressed a desire not to be saddled with the responsibility of this work, we might give it to some other officer. I have had something to do with the secretary to the Premier in connection with the Postponement of Debts Act, and I can add to the testimony with regard to that gentleman's ability and courtesy. The principle, however, is what I object to, and I think there is some justification for moving in the direction of reducing the item.

[Mr. Foley took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not agree with the principle of paying these additional sums to officers already in receipt of high salaries. I have nothing whatever against Mr. Shapcott. The salary he receives as secretary is adequate, and his time should be fully occupied without having to perform other duties. I move an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £150.

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

Ayes	10
Noes	11
Majority for	5

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Broun	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Draper	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Duff	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Holman	Mr. Munste
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)
Mr. Maley	

NOES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the vote as reduced to £1,715, agreed to.

Vote—London Agency, £6,000:

Item Agent General £1,500

Mr. PICKERING: It has been stated that the Agent General has authority to advertise this country as being capable or absorbing 25,000 immigrants per annum. I should like to know what steps have been taken to cancel those instructions in view of the fact that it is impossible for the State to absorb those people at such a rate.

The PREMIER: No instructions have been issued by the present Government to the Agent General that the State can absorb 25,000 people annually. We may be able to do so after the war, but not at present.

Mr. H. Robinson: Is the Agent General doing any indenting for the Government at present?

The PREMIER: Yes. A certain amount is being done through the Agent General's office. At one time it was done through the consulting engineer, but for some years past we have had an engineer in the Agent General's department and he sees to the indenting work. The indenting is not very considerable at present, but a certain amount is being done.

Item, Inspecting Engineer and Secretary, £550.

Mr. TEESDALE: I think it would be much more satisfactory if the consulting engineer were employed now and being paid on results. Very little indenting is being done, and this is a very high salary to pay an official working only half his time. I move—

That the item be reduced by £76.

The PREMIER: Prior to the present arrangement, the inspecting engineer and the secretary were two different officers. When Mr. Kessell, the late secretary, was retired, the two positions were combined, and the official now gets £550. If I remember rightly, the secretary previously got £650, but the salary was reduced, and the salary now received by the dual officer is less than was previously paid to the secretary. I hope the Committee will not reduce the item, for the salary is by no means too large. This officer's work as secretary alone would not be overpaid at £550.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In 1916 the work now being done by this officer was costing £1,488, for we then had an inspecting engineer, an assistant inspecting engineer, and a secretary. Therefore, there has been a reduction of £938. I do not think the present salary is too high. Some years ago, when we were paying commission, it cost several thousands per annum, and the inspection was nearly so good as it is now. The combined salary to-day is only a few pounds above that which we paid to the secretary in 1916.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item, Clerks, £1,196.

Mr. SMITH: The work of the Agent General's office has been considerably reduced during the last few years, yet the clerks have been reduced by only one. Seeing that there is practically no work at all going on there—

The Premier: Oh, yes, there is a lot of work.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The soldiers make a lot of work.

Hon. P. Collier: There has been a total reduction of over £1,000.

Mr. SMITH: The Commonwealth offices look after the soldiers.

Hon. J. Mitchell: No.

Mr. SMITH: Well, I am not going to interfere with anything being done on behalf of our soldiers.

Mr. TEESDALE: We have other departments to attend to the soldiers. These clerks in the London Agency are costing £1,196. It is out of all reason. I move—

That the item be reduced by £196.

The PREMIER: I hope the Committee will not reduce this item. The Government have cut down the Agent General's vote as much as possible. There has been a decrease of some £1,870 which, I think, is quite enough for one year. Hon. members imagine that there is nothing to do in the Agent General's office. As a matter of fact, there is a great deal to be done in the office in connection with our own State soldiers in England. I remember that at the time of the South African war, when I was at the Agent General's office, although there were but very few Western Australian soldiers on leave in England, they gave us a considerable amount of additional work. A savings bank for our soldiers has been opened at the Agent General's office. This is a new departure, which enables our soldiers to lodge money at the Agent General's office for transmission to their relatives in Western Australia. That alone keeps two clerks continually employed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Many of our soldiers meet at the Agent General's office.

The PREMIER: Yes, it is a meeting place for our men. Our soldiers also meet their friends at the Agent General's office. The Agent General has been representing that we have been cutting down his Estimates too much, but we considered it was necessary to reduce the expenditure wherever possible. The officers employed in that department have been asking for bonuses, which have been given to officers in the Home Service. The Agent General's offices of the States and Commonwealth have all given war bonuses, which have had to be given because of the increased cost of living making it impossible for the officials to exist on their salaries. Some of the commodities of the Old Country have gone up 300 per cent. I hope hon. members will not interfere further with this Vote.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am opposed to cutting down the Agent General's office. There is no more important office in connection with the work of development. It is also of inestimable benefit where our soldiers are concerned. There is much work for that office to do in connection with future emigration to Western Australia. If we have to keep an office in London let us keep it up decently.

Mr. Smith: Can we afford it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We cannot afford not to have it. If we are to get people from the Old Country the Agent General should be at work now. Other countries are at it already. It is too late to wait until the war is over. The Premier himself was a party to the reply sent to the British Government saying that we would take 25,000 people each year after the war. The Agent General has a perfect right to tell the British people that we are prepared to do this, and to make arrangements accordingly. I hope the amendment will not be passed.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: Last year this Vote was reduced in the case of a clerk, but in spite of the resolution of this Committee, more money has been spent than was voted. I think the office should be well equipped with all the information necessary in connection with people coming to this State, but I would point out that there has

been an actual increase in expenditure on the amount voted.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Much of the discussion to-night is due to the lack of information contained in the Estimates. The items are all bulked together and it is impossible to understand them. One clerk has been struck out, but we cannot say in which office the reduction was made. I would point out that the time may come when members opposite will be asking members on this side of the House for information.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Let us send the Estimates back to be re-printed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know that we can do that. The Colonial Treasurer has appealed to us for assistance, but how can we give it unless we are possessed of the necessary information, in connection with the Estimates, in details. It is not in the interests of the State that this information should not be forthcoming.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is quite right to say that the item in connection with temporary assistance was cut down last year. That reduction however, was made in March, after three parts of the year had passed. It was not possible therefore, to carry out the instruction. It would appear from the statement of the member for Albany that the Government disobeyed an order of the Committee, but the Government were not in a position to obey it because the time had already passed and the money been spent.

Mr. ANGELO: I am not greatly concerned about seven or eight clerks being paid this amount, but what appeals to me is that the expenditure for the current year has been cut down by £1,780. The Agent General has been accustomed to administer departments, and so long as he does not exceed the amount of his vote, we should leave the matter of employing clerical assistance to him. In view of the highly favourable war news, it would be a pity to destroy the immigration branch of the Agent General's office.

Mr. PICKERING: I support the item, on the ground that in the past the information furnished to intending immigrants from Great Britain has been very misleading and has led to great distress on the arrival of immigrants. It is essential that authentic information should be supplied to intending immigrants by State officers in London. I hope those officers will take heed of past experience.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It must be quite evident to the Committee that some amalgamation has taken place. The Government say to the Agent General, "We do not know how you are to effect amalgamation, but you will have to get your work done by seven clerks." The figures before the Committee have been prepared out here, and may not be quite exact. We have simply told the Agent General to get through on £8,000, leaving him to get through the work as best he can.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item, Incidental, including postage, stationery, travelling, rent, fuel, including British income tax, etc., £2,000.

Mr. SMITH: Does this item include further travelling expenses for Mr. Kessell? From information that has reached me, I understand the Government are pledged to further expenditure in connection with the bringing out of Mr. Kessell's furniture, which has just recently arrived in Western Australia.

The PREMIER: The Government are not pledged to pay anything for the bringing out of Mr. Kessell's furniture.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Public Service Commissioner, £1,334:

Item, Secretary, £408.

Mr. PICKERING: Does this item represent an increase of salary from £312 to £408?

The PREMIER: The officer was voted a special allowance last year. The total amount paid to him is included in one item on these Estimates.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government motor car service, £1,860:

Mr. TEENDALE: What is the reason for an increase of some £1,800 in this vote?

The PREMIER: Great reductions have really been made in the cost of the motor car service: but this year we have adopted a somewhat different mode of showing the expenditure. In order to meet the Treasurer's wishes we have simply abolished charging departmental debits, so that no revenue is shown for the current year as being payable by other departments. Last year £1,800 was shown on that account. The gross expenditure has not really been affected. Many officers had cars which they used in the country and elsewhere, and also employed for the purpose of running them home. We now have all the cars housed at the central garage and under the control of one officer. Thus, if a car is not being used by the particular officer to whom it is allotted, the Government can use it for special work, instead of hiring another car for that purpose. Under the new system of control non-official running is prevented, and greater economy is attained.

Hon. J. Mitchell: How many men are employed under the item of £600 for wages?

The PREMIER: Four men are employed in the garage at present.

Hon. P. Collier: Six hundred pounds is not very big pay for four men.

The PREMIER: Three men were employed at the garage originally, but when all the cars were housed there another man came in. I do not know whether he is included in this item.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Premier's Department.

Lands and Surveys Department, Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Minister—Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister) in charge of the votes.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £46,326:

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister - Nelson) [10-28]: In introducing the Estimates of the Lands Department I desire to state that, regard being had to the depletion of our agricultural population, the progress made in land selection must be considered satisfactory. The area under crop for 1918 is estimated at 1,679,686 acres, while that for 1917 was 2,004,944 acres. The decrease is to be regretted, especially in view of the assistance which has been rendered to settlers by the State. Sheep have increased very considerably in the south-western district, the total now being estimated at over three million. Unfortunately, the increase is confined to the more settled districts; the out-districts, such as the eastern districts and the districts north of Geraldton, have not increased at all. I trust that in the near future the settlers will alter that position. Although we cannot congratulate ourselves on the state of the wheat industry, the pastoral industry has never been in a more prosperous condition. The good seasons which of recent years have

obtained throughout the State, have proved very favourable indeed to the increase of our flocks and to the production of wool. The price of wool has been highly satisfactory, with the result that the pastoralists as a whole are in a very strong financial position.

Mr. Smith: The Federal Government will swoop down and collar the lot.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The total number of sheep now in Western Australia is estimated at 6,384,191, as against 5,529,980 in 1916. The cattle in 1917 numbered 957,086, and in 1916 the figures were 868,930. The rapid increase in stock has resulted in the recognition of the necessity for freezing and canning works. Those at Wyndham are nearing completion, and others are projected at Carnarvon, Geraldton, and Fremantle.

Mr. Willcock: What assistance are you giving?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Time will show. The following few figures will give an idea of the work of the department, and the areas held under the various tenures. The figures are rather dry, but it is necessary that the House should have the information. Town, suburban, and rural lots alienated totalled 1,273, representing an area of 186,001 acres. With regard to conditional purchases, 973 blocks were approved, the area being 546,076 acres. The total area held under conditional purchase is 13,105,628 acres, and the area alienated at the present time is 8,462,085 acres. The area of the State is estimated at 624,588,000 acres. It will therefore be seen that only about 3·4 per cent. has been sold or is in process of sale, and when people say that Western Australia is practically all bought and sold they evidently know very little about the size of the State. The pastoral and other leases approved totalled 20,383,481 acres. The pastoral leases held at the present time total 204,821,869 acres. Other leases total 1,667,000 acres. Strangely enough, this year there have been many applications for land. One would have thought that owing to the war and to the large number of men who have left our shores, particularly the agricultural population, that such would not have been the case. During the year there have been 21,117,021 acres applied for.

Mr. Willcock: Pastoral leases?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Principally pastoral. I would like to refer to the effect on the revenue of the reduction in the price of conditional purchase lands authorised by the 1915 and 1917 Acts. In 1914-15 the actual revenue receivable from conditional purchase areas was £290,703. In 1917-18 the amount was £217,094, so that while the number of the holdings has been but slightly reduced in the aggregate, the revenue receivable has been reduced by £73,600.

Hon. P. Collier: And what has been the increase as the result of the double price on the pastoral leases?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I will come to that later.

Mr. Maley: You say receivable, you do not say received.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I spare the feelings of the hon. member by not using the word "received." I wish I could say received. To say that we had received that sum would be trying to place the position before the House in a false light, because unfortunately at the end of June last land rents were in arrears to the extent of £251,000. It will be remembered

that in 1915-16 the rents were paid by the Industries Assistance Board, and they paid something like £336,000. That has not been continued, and the result is that land rents are in arrears to the extent of £221,000. This sum of course includes soldiers' holdings and the settlers under the Industries Assistance Board. The arrears are due to bad seasons and to the war, as well as to the policy of leniency in not forfeiting for non-payment of instalments of purchase money. The whole idea has been to try to keep the men who are on the land to-day where they are. Unfortunately many of them are in a bad financial position, and it is quite impossible for them to pay their rents. The leader of the Opposition asked what was the increased revenue from pastoral leases. That is anticipated to reach £46,000 per annum.

Hon. P. Collier: You got some of that last year.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Very little. It took some little time after the Act was passed to get the leases prepared. With regard to poison and wodgil lands, full advantage has been taken by the settlers of the provisions for the reductions. The end of next December has been fixed as the latest time in which the settlers can make their applications to have the reductions made. It became absolutely necessary to have some fixed date, because otherwise we should have had inspectors travelling over the same country day after day, week after week, and perhaps year after year. By fixing the date at the end of the year we hope before June next to have all the inspections completed and prices fixed. To the end of June 178 holdings containing 177,000 acres in the wodgil infested area were classified. Hon. members know the great trouble this wodgil land has been. It was sold in all good faith; the land inspectors in all good faith advised settlers to go ahead with their clearing, and to put in a crop. A large area was cleared and the result was disastrous. No one can tell why. A Royal Commission was appointed to go into the matter. They investigated the whole thing carefully and came to the conclusion that the wodgil lands would not produce anything in the way of cereals, or even rape or grasses for the first five or six years. Hon. members can see at once that if a man had to go on cultivating for five or six years without getting a return, it would be an expensive grass when it was raised at the end of that time. Consequently it was quite useless to expect settlers to do anything with wodgil land. Reports have been received with regard to 100 of these areas containing 107,000 acres, and 35,000 acres have been proved to be wodgil land. The recommendations of the Wodgil Commission have been adopted and the price of the land has been reduced to 1s. per acre. In the case where wodgil land predominates in the holding, that is to say, if 40 per cent. of the holding is wodgil land, the settler may move if he desires to do so, to some other land and he is credited with the rents he has paid on his previous holding. Regarding the pastoral leases, applications have been received for leave to surrender under the provisions of the 1917 Act, by which the lessees have their tenure extended to 1948 provided double rent is paid from the date of approval. These applications have been received from 2,300 lessees who represent 126 million acres. Applications for leave to surrender under the provisions of the 1917 Act, by which lessees have their tenure extended till 1948, provided they pay double rent from the date of approval, subject to subsequent

adjustment on appraisal, have been received from the lessees of 2,300 pastoral leases containing 126 million acres. That is to say, 2,300 pastoral leases have been brought under the Act. Other lessees holding more than one million acres have availed themselves of the provisions of the 1918 Act, applying to the area over one million acres, by which anyone purchasing can take advantage of the tenure till 1948, if application to surrender is made within a year after the end of the war if double rent is paid from 1st April, 1918. It will be seen that not much revenue has been gained from that source during the last financial year. These pastoral leases will all have to be appraised later, which means that Mr. Surveyor Canning and his staff will have to be sent out. They will start on the Murchison and work northwards.

Hon. P. Collier: Who is the member of the board besides?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The Surveyor General, the district surveyor, and one member appointed from the district being classified at the time constitute the board.

Hon. P. Collier: The district surveyor; that is not Mr. Canning.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): He is district surveyor for the Murchison northwards, and one member of the board is appointed from time to time. One will be appointed for the Murchison, another for the Gascoyne, and another for the Fortescue, and so on. It is not likely that one individual can be found who will have the necessary knowledge to classify and appraise the whole of this country.

Mr. Smith: What knowledge will the Surveyor General have?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): As it happens, the Surveyor General has been over most of this country as far back as 30 years ago, and he has been out there since.

Mr. Smith interjected.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is not the idea of assessing the value of a station but the land as a whole. Mr. Bush owns three million acres on the Gascoyne, and of that three million acres, although it is a huge tract of country for any one man to hold, a very large area of that land will not carry a sheep to 50 acres. I know the district; I put in many years there. The value of some of the land is four times as great as that held by Mr. Bush. Boolathanna is four times as valuable as Bidginna, and I think I shall prove to be right when the classification has been made. In one case you have this position: There is good land that has been proved to be able to stand a drought. The salt bush on the Boolathanna run allows that run to withstand the drought, and the land is in close proximity to the port. Then in regard to Bidginna; it is 150 miles to the port and not the drought resisting country that the salt bush country is. Therefore, I say it is four times as valuable. The people holding the land will have to pay more than those holding the land further back. Regarding surveys, this branch has been more active during the past year: 195,395 acres of rural lands have been subdivided as against 97,918 acres in the previous year. No doubt the more liberal provisions as to instalments of purchase money in the first five years of a holding have induced more applications for the land. As members know at present no rents are paid for the first five years. What the result will be later on, I do not know, but at present it has induced people

to take up the land. Whether they will throw it up at the end of the five years is another point. Personally I do not think they will. However, they cannot take it up for speculative purposes because they cannot transfer. They must do something with the land unless they can get protection, and that is only given where a good case can be made out. The survey branch of the department has been very active; 637 rural holdings, totalling 195,394 acres, have been surveyed, 527 town lots, 206 miles of road, and 338 miles of traverses; although the war has been going on the Survey Department has been kept very busy. The survey of Nornalup has been discontinued during the year, after 48 miles of road, 96 miles of river and other traverses have been made. That country has been surveyed on a different principle to the usual principle adopted in the past, inasmuch as the rivers were traversed and the country surveyed on the contour principle. The old idea was to cut out the blocks first, and then make the roads where they could. Consequently, the grades are of all descriptions on the roads to-day; whereas if the contour system had been adopted in the old days there would have been good roads and good grades not affecting the holdings at all. It would have been to the benefit of the holders down there if that system had been adopted. Those same surveyors at Nornalup were shifted to Perth and on the way up they surveyed 200 blocks in Manjimup. These averaged 107 acres each exclusive of marketable timber. On the approach of winter some of the surveyors were shifted from the South-West, which is very wet, the rainfall being up to 60 inches in some places. They were put on to classify both Crown lands and private lands along the Eastern railway as far as Northam, Toodyay, York, and Beverley, within seven miles of the railway. When the district has been classified investigations will be pursued along other railway lines. This is in connection with the soldier settlement scheme.

Mr. Broun: Waste of money.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is not waste of money. I say it is a very excellent idea to know what the land along the railways is worth so that if people are not making the best use of it we can come in and say, "we must have it; you are not making use of it," and we can then put soldiers on it and they will be close to the railway.

Mr. Broun: You could have got the whole of the information from the local roads boards.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): If the hon. member, instead of making such a statement, saw the works and the plans, he would not say the information could be obtained from the local offices.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you say the surveyors are out surveying and classifying the lands.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Not surveying, but classifying. They are classifying it to see if it is suitable for soldier settlement.

The Premier: They are not surveying private lands.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): They are classifying the private property.

Hon. P. Collier: But there are no Crown lands in the districts you have mentioned.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): There is a number of large reserves which can be utilised. Some very necessary triangulation has been completed between Norseman and Coolgardie. Remarks have been made from time to

time as to the number of draftsmen in the Lands Office. During the year Crown grants and leases prepared totalled 3,364, an increase of 577 over the previous year. When people want their Crown grants and leases we must be in a position to supply them, and unless the draftsmen keep the work up to date we are not in that position. Only a few years ago there were 64 draftsmen in the Lands Office, whereas to-day there are only 33. I, personally, have been through the department, and I can assure hon. members that every man in it knows what he has to do. I questioned every draftsman in the department and got satisfactory replies from each. I am satisfied that those men at least are doing their duty.

Hon. P. Collier: Most men usually are when the boss goes round.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): But in this case they did not know that the boss was going round. I went along without any notice whatever.

Hon. P. Collier: Can the Minister tell us the area that has been abandoned and thrown on to the Agricultural Bank?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): No, that is under the Minister for Industries. He has his own troubles.

Mr. Broun: How many abandoned farms are there?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The Minister in charge of the Agricultural Bank will give you that. I cannot say what the figures are. All the abandoned farms are in the hands of the Agricultural Bank, controlled by the Minister for Industries. Regarding the district survey offices, it has been stated that they should all be closed down. I do not agree with that. Some were closed down by a previous Administration but were opened again in March of 1917. Others have not been closed down at all.

Mr. Smith: Where is the necessity for such an office in Northam?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): There is a surveyor there.

Hon. P. Collier: Is there an officer at Bridgetown?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Yes, and he is very busy. It is a most important centre. When the hon. member was in power, his Administration did not close the Bridgetown office. In a country of vast distances, such as Western Australia, too much centralisation is bad. While development is proceeding we desire that new settlers and others on the land should be able to get information as quickly as possible, and do as much business as possible in their local districts. Therefore we must have a reliable officer locally stationed to deal with those people when they come inquiring. Again, the local officer has to consult with the road boards as to their requirements, and is expected to advise the head office promptly on any questions referred to him. The expense involved is not great, while the amount of work to be done is large indeed. If it is not done in the district office it has to be done in Perth, which means sending a surveyor to, say, Bridgetown at considerable cost. Take for instance the district surveyor at Narrogin. He has control over 28,500,000 acres. He has 25 road board districts and 125 townships. Hon. members can imagine that he is a very busy man.

Hon. P. Collier: Especially in regard to the townsites.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is much better that questions cropping up from time to time through the various road boards or municipalities should be dealt with on the spot; it is cheaper and better in every respect to have an officer locally stationed. I hope that before long we shall have a Consolidated Land Act. Hon. members who know the condition of the Land Act to-day, with its many amendments, know that it would puzzle a Philadelphian lawyer to find what he wants quickly and expeditiously. It is absolutely necessary that the Land Act and its amendments should be compiled under the Statutes Compilation Act of 1905. Regarding the Estimates, the total amount provided for the working of the Lands Department proper is £43,489, being a decrease of £2,837 as against last year. An amount of £2,500 is provided for soldier settlement, which is under the control of the Minister for Lands, and which will be used for recouping the salaries of officers from other departments, whose time will be mainly devoted to this work. At present the Lands Department has no Lands inspectors at all, but depends entirely on the Agricultural Bank to do all inspections. Hon. members will see from the Estimates that a certain amount is set down for inspectors. They are Agricultural Bank inspectors, and that amount is merely a recoup to the Agricultural Bank. It will be seen that the number of permanent employees has been reduced by 10, and the total salary vote by £561. This will be further reduced next year, when the item provided for the previous Under Secretary will not re-appear. I have gone carefully into the question, of staff and I do not consider it can be further cut down by so much as one man. Incidental expenses are less than those for last year, but the apparent decrease in postage is caused by the fact that the printing will be charged to the Printing Office Vote and not debited direct to this department as was the case previously. The Surveys Vote is much the same as it was last year, except that no provision is made for lithography. This will be charged against the Lithographic Department, as printing is charged against the Printing Department. It is a matter for regret that it was impossible to find more money for the Surveys Vote, especially under the heading of "Surveys Generally," from which we pay for surveys of town lots, roads and reserves. The survey of roads and reserves might be put off for a time, but we will have to do this work and the money must be found. It is a pity that the state of the finances will not permit of a larger amount being put down for surveys, so that this necessary work can be carried out as it should be. We have a big State and have to get rid of a lot of land. We must, in fairness to our settlers, have complete plans, and to procure these it is necessary to have a sufficient number of draftsmen. In 1908-09 the number of draftsmen was 67. In 1912-13 the number had risen to 106, and now it is only 39. In Victoria and South Australia, where settlement may be thought to be at a standstill, there are 35 permanent draftsmen employed in each State. Here, with a lot of work to be done, we might get through with 33 draftsmen, but that number must be increased in the near future. As I have said, the proposed expenditure is £43,489. The estimated revenue is £290,000, being £247,111 above the estimated expenditure. The revenue from conditional purchases is likely to be less than it was last year

of land and the reduced payment to the Industries Assistance Board, but the revenue from pastoral leases, £47,000, will more than balance that.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—PRESTON ROAD DISTRICT SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 11.5 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 16th October, 1918.

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

[For "Question on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

MOTION—HARBOUR BOARD, BUNBURY, TO DISALLOW REGULATION.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan)
[4.34]: I move—

That the regulation made under the Bunbury Harbour Board Act, 1909, and laid on the Table of the House on the 2nd instant, be disallowed.

Owing to the provisions of the Act it would be impossible for me to move any amendment in this regulation, otherwise I should have been disposed to move that the regulation be amended. I am left, however, with no alternative but to move that the regulation be actually disallowed. The reason which impels me and those interested in the regulation will I think, be fully shown in what I have to say regarding the Bunbury Harbour Board. Prior to the passing of the regulation the charge imposed in respect of wharfage was 1s. 8d. per load of timber, and in respect of haulage 10d. per load, making a total of 2s. 6d. per load. Prior to the board's coming into existence, and when the whole of the port operations were under the control of the Commissioner of Railways, the total charges amounted to only 1s. 3d. per load. After the board began operations, however, the charges were increased, as I have stated, by 100 per cent. From reading the reports and the returns which have been made by the board, it is manifest that there is no need, or that there should be no need had the funds of the board been properly conserved, for this extra impost or surtax. According to those annual reports,